

## **An epistolary Thomas Hardy: proximity and distance**

Submitted by Helen Angear to the University of Exeter  
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## **Abstract**

This thesis presents an archive-based socio-historical and literary-critical study of the poet and novelist Thomas Hardy who is encountered through epistolary conversations. It situates letter exchange within a broader framework of collaborative writing practices and offers a focus on correspondence as a key aspect of life-writing.

As a leading literary figure of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Hardy was a desirable correspondent for fellow writers, critics, artists and other cultural figures – as well as for his readers, who existed in their thousands across the globe. While there have been studies of Hardy as letter writer, as well as analysis of postal communication in his texts, this is the fullest exploration of letters he received.

The thesis takes a multi-faceted approach, engaging with a multiplicity of letters at Dorset County Museum as it seeks to open up the archive to a wider audience. Underpinned by the concepts of distance and proximity, the chapters respectively address homosocial bonds between male writers, intimacy in friendships between the sexes, and a repositioning in relation to the modernist movement, concluding by asking what the correspondence of a canonical writer can reveal about the wider concept of author as celebrity. Through the lens of epistolary dialogue, the thesis explores relationships between Hardy and the people who wrote to him, both familiar and unknown. It examines the intimacy of friendships, as well as the connections sought by readers who found they could write directly to a famous author – an indirect result of the postal reform of the 1840s – and challenges the idea that ‘meet-the-author’ practices were a relatively new phenomenon.

The study provides both a close analysis of Hardy's networks and a conceptual study of the nature of literary reputations, legacies and archives. It is accompanied by a digitisation project which allows wider consideration of the implications of the digital future of archives, and the pedagogical investments of the research can be seen in the appendices on teaching practice.

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The practical aspects of the project would not have been possible without the expertise of the Digital Humanities and Special Collections teams at Exeter – not to mention the many trips Andrew and Marilyn Leah made between Dorchester and Exeter to ensure safe delivery of boxes upon boxes of letters during the digitisation phase.

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## 1. Introduction

### Opening up the archives

My dear friend: this time your letter travelled to me at a decent pace – arriving by Monday afternoon post – a two days' transit.

Thomas Hardy to Florence Henniker, 11 September 1895

I did not mean to write you such a long letter. 'La how I dew run on!' as the servant-girl said.

Edmund Gosse to Thomas Hardy, 26 February 1906

In today's culture of electronic, virtual communication methods, the handwritten letter has become something of a novelty. But for those communicating in the nineteenth and much of the twentieth centuries, the letter, along with the telegram, was the primary way of conversing across time and space, complemented but not replaced by the advent of the telephone in the 1870s.

In recent decades, there has been increased scholarly interest in the cultural practice of letter-writing from the Early Modern period onwards, the materiality of letters as objects, and the historic value of correspondence as a way of revealing exchanges of information and exploring personal and professional relationships. Catherine Golden's study *Posting It: The Victorian Revolution in Letter Writing* (2009) paved the way for a renewed interest in Victorian letter culture, followed by Kate Thomas's 2012 publication *Postal Pleasures: Sex, Scandal and Victorian Letters*. This thesis provides new understanding of the 'culture of epistolarity' (De



Lungo Camiciotti 1) in the public and personal life of a canonical writer – Thomas Hardy. By examining the epistolary conversations of a Victorian writer who continued to write in the twentieth century, it also brings a new comparative approach to Victorian, Edwardian and post-World War One letter practices. The primary focus is not on Hardy's own letters but on those he received from others. This correspondence, held at Dorset County Museum, forms part of the Thomas Hardy Memorial Collection, recently selected for the UNESCO UK Memory of the World Programme register.

This study was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). It forms one of a number of southwest projects supported by Research and Enterprise in Arts and Creative Technology (REACT), a collaboration between the UWE Bristol, Watershed, and the Universities of Bath, Bristol, Cardiff and Exeter and one of four AHRC Knowledge Exchange Hubs for the Creative Economy. Based at the University of Exeter and Dorset County Museum, the aim of this project was to open up the museum's Hardy archive through digitisation of an extensive letter collection. The letters to Hardy had been internally catalogued by volunteers at the museum but were unpublished and largely unknown to those outside Hardy studies. The current project involved photographing over four thousand letters over a period of approximately eighteen months. This process also created an opportunity to produce a basic condition report of each item and to generate further information for archival cataloguing. After digitisation, one hundred letters were selected for transcription.

The approach I have taken in this thesis seeks to complement the aims of the digitisation project: to open up the archives, providing a virtual tour of a variety of areas of scholarly interest. Research and digitisation work together to provide new contexts and ways of reading Hardy, enhancing access to the archive. The project also provided an opportunity to inform the museum's future display programmes, generate new outreach initiatives and work with schools.

Thomas Hardy was born in Dorset in 1840 and initially trained as an architect. Many of his novels are set in the semi-fictional region of Wessex – Wessex being a term he first used in *Far From the Madding Crowd* in 1874. Based on the medieval Anglo-Saxon kingdom, Hardy's Wessex includes not only his home county but also parts of Devon, Somerset, Wiltshire, Hampshire and Berkshire, with Cornwall being referred to as Outer Wessex. Although Hardy spent some time living in London, he was always drawn to the South West, both as inspiration for his writing, and as his home. By 1885 he was able to design his own house, built by his brother, in Dorchester. He lived at this house, which he called Max Gate, until his death in 1928. How others connected with Hardy through epistolary communication is of particular interest as he was located at a distance from London, the country's perceived epicentre of culture.

Hardy was born in the same year that Britain underwent a 'communication revolution' (Koehler 6). Up until 1840, sending a letter through the postal system was a costly affair and it was the recipient who had to pay. Each stage of a letter's journey incurred additional costs and the price also increased per page. However, Hardy entered into a world in which epistolary communication had become more

affordable to all. Rowland Hill was the social reformer who had campaigned for the transformation of the country's postal service. In 1837, he produced the pamphlet *Post Office Reform: Its Importance and Practicability*; three years after, Britain was getting used to a new pre-paid method – the postage stamp – that allowed any letter to be sent for just one penny. By the time Hardy wrote *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* in 1891, letters were being sent across the country in their billions. The affordability of the Penny Post and a greatly enhanced 'postal infrastructure' (Koehler 5) included people of all classes within one vast communication network. Karin Koehler argues that Hardy was living and writing at a time when, 'in conjunction with the rapidly expanding railway and emerging telegraph system, the penny post [was] transform[ing] perceptions of geographical and temporal distance' (6).<sup>1</sup>

The collection provides an intimate way of reflecting on the expansion of national and international postal networks. By letter, Hardy could be reached from as far away as Australia and the Philippines. The Royal Mail installed a post box on the outside wall of Max Gate in the 1920s, making Hardy's home an integral part of these networks. At the height of his fame, readers who went as pilgrims to Max Gate were often most likely to catch a glimpse of the writer when he went out to post a letter and take an evening stroll. Hardy acknowledged how much he appreciated 'letters that can really be called such in the old sense ... a pleasure I seldom experience nowadays' (*CL* 7: 104, qtd. in Elliott 209), but as there was no

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on postal reform in the nineteenth century, see M. J. Dauntton, *Royal Mail: The Post Office Since 1840*. London: Athlone, 1985; Catherine J Golden's chapter 'Why the Victorians Needed a Revolution in Letter Writing', in *Posting It: The Victorian Revolution in Letter Writing*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009: 43-8.

way to control the amount of correspondence he received in any one day, it also became a burden associated with his fame.<sup>2</sup>

As a socio-historical examination of Hardy's life through letters – as seen from his correspondents – this thesis explores how letter-writing affects and influences human relationships, and seeks to understand how individuals were connected to Hardy within epistolary networks. While there are a significant number of famous correspondents within the letter collection, including Siegfried Sassoon, Grant Allen, Ezra Pound, Virginia Woolf, Herbert Henry Asquith and J.M. Barrie, this thesis also acknowledges the value of the thousands of unknown correspondents who wrote to Hardy – his readers, aspiring writers and those who felt an affinity with what they understood to be the writer's world view. Chapters one and two focus on individual correspondents in order to examine what part letter-writing played in the maintenance of friendships at the turn of the century. By contrast, chapters three, four and five take a wider approach to consider why younger writers and Hardy's fans wrote to him.<sup>3</sup> To this end, this thesis shows how the letters are of crucial importance in contributing to our understanding of the public perception of

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<sup>2</sup> In a few instances I have cited an indirect source in this thesis. In these cases I have also consulted the original but have chosen to indicate the secondary material that directed me to it during my research.

<sup>3</sup> I have chosen to employ the term fan within my research as it was being used in transatlantic discourse in the late nineteenth century. It is useful in showing how some of Hardy's readers displayed more fanatical behaviour. OED entries include: 1889 *Kansas Times & Star* 26 Mar. Kansas City baseball fans are glad they're through with Dave Rowe as a ball club manager; 1896 G. Ade *Artie* xvii. 158 'I'm goin' to be the worst fan in the whole bunch'; 1901 *Dial. Notes* 2 139 *Fan*, a baseball enthusiast; common among reporters; 1915 *Film Flashes* 13 Nov. 1 It is quite usual for a picture 'fan' to come out of one theatre and immediately cross the road to another.

Hardy, and the place of the writer more generally, in both British and international culture in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

## **1.1 Proximity and Distance**

The ability of letters to bridge temporal and geographical distances and to create perceived proximity is typically at the heart of epistolary theory, and can be regarded as one of the defining features of the letter genre. However, recent work on 're-theorising letterness' (Poustie 1), such as that of Liz Stanley (2004, 2011), Margareta Jolly and Liz Stanley (2005) and David Barton and Nigel Hall (2000), suggests that absence or spatial distance between participants might not be as important as once thought. While acknowledging this shift within epistolary studies, I examine distance in more conceptual terms. What is the distance between friends of different genders during the Victorian period and how could epistolary exchanges reduce this distance, or reconfigure concepts of intimacy in friendships between the sexes? What is the perceived distance between Hardy and the modernist writers of the early twentieth century, and how can an examination of epistolary communication across this divide help us to re-position Hardy in relation to the modernist movement? Does the ability for a fan to communicate through letter form break down traditional author-reader distance or does it maintain and reinforce it? In addressing these questions, this thesis explores the way in which 'letters inhabit an interesting ontological as well as epistemological space' between the public and private, 'the personal and the impersonal' (Jolly and Stanley 79).

Of particular relevance to this thesis is Liz Stanley's way of viewing epistolary communication as a form of 'gift exchange' ('Epistolary Gift' 140) which works to maintain 'ongoing social and relational bonds of relationship and connection between the writer/signatory and the addressee' ('Epistolary Gift' 135), rather than simply repairing absences. Many of Hardy's correspondents, including Edmund Gosse, Florence Henniker and Siegfried Sassoon, were close friends who spent time with Hardy, as well as entering into enduring epistolary relationships with him; I argue that the value instilled in writing and receiving letters as part of these friendships enriched the bond in each case and offered a unique space for their connection to exist between private and public spheres. However, while Sarah Poustie notes that sustained correspondence is 'prototypically interspersed by face-to-face encounters' (21), and that this is central to the concept of the epistolary gift, I also accommodate fan letters within this concept of letter-writing as gift exchange. While Hardy's readers typically remained outside the personal sphere – and any face-to-face encounters were really on a more voyeuristic level – there was still a sense of imagined intimacy achieved by gifting Hardy an appreciation letter, despite the non-reciprocal nature of the act.

## 1.2 Hardy as Epistolarian

Hardy's letters, published in eight volumes, have been available online since 2002, opening up opportunities for in-depth study of what Stanley refers to as one person's 'epistolarium', or epistolary output ('Epistolarium' 201). Scholarship of the letters has included not only the work of the editors, Michael Millgate, Richard Little Purdy and Keith Wilson, but also that of Angelique Richardson (2013) and Ralph W.V. Elliott (2016). Richardson argues, '[t]he letter was the form of communication that best served' Hardy, because the 'flexibility of the form' suited his quiet, extraordinarily sympathetic, and most intently observant' nature ('Many-sided Thomas' 3). However, the in-built flexibility and variability of letter-writing means that attempts to pin Hardy down as a certain type of epistolarian – which Elliott points out is itself a nineteenth-century term (209) – are met with complications. There might be identifiable linguistic features and characteristics in Hardy's letter, as Elliott suggests, but these are not consistently evidenced. If, as Poustie argues, 'a letter is a performance adapted to suit a particular audience' (4), then there is no one style that can be attributed to Hardy as letter-writer. As Richardson emphasises in her review of the *Collected Letters*, they 'provide insight into Hardy's many-sidedness' ('Many-sided Thomas' 3). So, when Elliott writes that it is the first person that is important here, because Hardy's fiction is always in the third person, we must acknowledge that there are potentially multiple versions of this first-person presentation. I challenge Elliott's assertion that '[i]t is here, perhaps more than anywhere else in his writings, that we can listen to the authentic voice of Thomas Hardy without the veil of his fiction' (210), because I argue that there are different

veils that are adopted in letter-writing, ones that might be transparent to a familiar interlocutor but keep other third-party or unintended readers at a distance.

Annette R. Federico asserts that 'written communication has an unusually large role in Hardy's fiction', in which 'writing a letter is only the first part of an intensely mental and rather ghostly activity' (269). This thesis seeks to complement scholarship on Hardy's fictional use of letters by examining his own personal engagement within epistolary networks. Karin Koehler's recent study of Victorian communication is the most comprehensive exploration of the way in which letters and telegrams feature in Hardy's novels, poems and short stories. Through her examination of epistolary communication in Hardy's work, Koehler helps to uncover what Hardy may have thought about self-representation in letter-writing. For example, Koehler argues that the protagonist of *Two on a Tower*, Viviette Constantine, 'strives to write letters projecting an accurate, transparent, and coherent self-image' (43) but, in the hands of Hardy, her letter-writing becomes a way to reveal 'the unsettling impact of the discovery that human character – even one's own – might be not only unstable but unknowable' (81).

Both Koehler (78) and Elliott (210) draw our attention to the disparity between Samuel Johnson's now well-known comment to the Welsh diarist Hester Thrale (27 October 1777) that, in a letter, the sender's 'soul lies naked', and his later assertion in *Lives of The English Poets* (1779) that:

it has been so long said as to be commonly believed that the true characters of men may be found on their letters, and that he who writes to his friend lays his heart open before him. But the truth is that such were simple friendships of the *Golden Age*, and are now the friendships



only of children ... but a friendly letter is a calm and deliberate performance in the cool of leisure, in the stillness of solitude, and surely no man sits down to depreciate by design his own character. (Johnson 206-7, qtd. in Koehler 78)

In this thesis, these conflicting ideas and attitudes toward the present-ness or transparency of the self and truth value in letter-writing are taken into consideration.

### **1.3 The Concept of the Self in Epistolary Communication**

Galia Benziman (2013) and J. Hillis Miller (1991) have explored the idea of epistolary selves in Hardy's literary treatment of letter exchanges. Miller cites Jacques Derrida and Franz Kafka in order to argue that the process of writing is one of dislocation because the soul is moved outside the self (171). In Miller's work, Kafka's suggestion that it is 'one's own ghost which develops between the lines of the letter one is writing' (Kafka 229, qtd. in Miller 171) is combined with Derrida's concept of the writer as a 'phantom self' in 'Télépathie' (1981). Miller then extends these ideas to by arguing that the writer, but also the intended recipient, undergo dislocation because a 'new phantom written self' and 'phantom receiver of that writing' come into being (172). The process of dislocation in epistolary acts is important to my investigation of proximity and distance, but rather than accepting that this results in a 'an intercourse with ghosts' (Kafka 229) – which suggests that sender and receiver are mere echoes of the real selves – I argue that it is really the case that different selves, or different aspects of the self, are presented in letter-writing; sometimes more or less honest, more or less guarded versions of the self that occupies the physical world or the internal world of the mind. In her analysis of

Hardy's literary use of letters, Koehler suggests that: 'letters that reach their recipient are not faithful and spontaneous transcriptions of lived emotion [...] but carefully considered and constructed, though not necessarily dishonest, artefacts' (88). In this thesis the linguistic notions of 'ghosts' or 'phantom selves' are replaced by what I choose to refer to as liminal selves, versions of the self that emerge in correspondence because they occupy a position at the boundaries of the private and the public.

In support of this argument, I refer to the following observation made by Hardy and recorded in his biography *Life and Work*.<sup>4</sup>

Dec. 4. I am more than ever convinced that persons are successively various persons, according as each special strand in their characters is brought uppermost by circumstances. (241)

In this case, 'special strand[s]' of a person's personality and identity are brought out in epistolary communication with different interlocutors. As Koehler suggests, Hardy conceived identity 'as an ever-evolving process, permanently shaped and transformed by environmental and internal factors' (80). What Derrida saw as a process in which the writer of a postcard or letter produces an intended recipient, I regard as a more co-operative and reciprocal process between sender and recipient, with the letter as the site of negotiation and (re)construction. In Hardy's fictional world of Wessex, Tess's letter to Angel Clare might never find its recipient because Tess is writing to a perceived version of her lover, a more open and progressive construction of the self that can only be realised in Angel at the end of

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<sup>4</sup> Hardy prepared his official biography for publication after his death. *The Early Life* (1928) and *Later Years of Thomas Hardy* (1930) were published over the name of Florence Hardy but they cannot be regarded as Hardy's autobiography as Florence made significant alterations. In this thesis I refer to *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, edited by Michael Millgate (1984), which has restored Hardy's final revisions.

*Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. Yet, by contrast, when examining Hardy's own epistolary relationships, there is evidence of more successful collaborative construction of epistolary selves.

## 1.4 Dialogic Approaches

By engaging with the concept of liminal selves in epistolary acts, my research takes a dialogic approach. Victorian Studies has recently seen a shift towards a revival of the nineteenth-century practice of the double biography, in which two writers might produce a work collaboratively or be written about together to show reciprocal influence (James and North 133-4). This marks a move away from a focus on an individual and toward representations of partnerships, friendship circles and social/cultural communities (Hay 'Adventures of' n. pag.). Of particular significance to this study is the role of networks in correspondence. The (re)construction of social and cultural networks through archival research and digitisation methods enhances the prosopographical knowledge of Hardy and his contemporaries, as links created between the sender and the recipient, as well as internal links to different people referenced within the letters, can be mapped and examined.

In *Life and Work*, Hardy included observational notes on 'the advantages of the letter-system of telling a story' (123), acknowledging that:

[H]earing what one side has to say, you are led constantly to the imagination of what the other side must be feeling, and at last are anxious to know if the other side does really feel what you imagine. (123)

The same principle can be applied when reading his *Collected Letters*, as they tell the story of Hardy's life from one side and leave the reader always imagining what the other side wrote, felt and intended. Therefore, this thesis opens up opportunities to answer these questions.

My first encounter with the archive encouraged a dialogic approach, as, while the majority of the letters are incoming correspondence, there are also one hundred and fifty to his friend Florence Henniker. Alongside these originals from Hardy's hand, there are over six hundred copies of Hardy's outgoing epistolarium. They sit in the same archival envelopes as the incoming correspondents' missives, but they are not in sequence. Perhaps even more interestingly, often an incoming letter bears evidence of Hardy's possibly immediate engagement with the communication, in the form of the draft replies he pencilled onto his mail (Figure 1). Fair copies were made from these drafts, either by himself, his wife or later his secretary, May O'Rourke, and this might be an amended version, but it did mean that Hardy had a dialogic record of that particular epistolary conversation. William Decker points out that:

even where both sides of a correspondence are available, the experiences of reading a 'conversation of pens' (Gerber 2005, 317) one after the other and in quick temporal succession is likely to create a very different interpretation from that experienced by the original writers and recipients, for whom reading and writing were inextricably linked activities in the exchange of letters. (*Epistolary Practices* 21)

As such, the presence of Hardy's pencil draft replies brings the twenty-first century reader as close to an original dialogic context as is possible.

Margaretta Jolly and Liz Stanley refer to a built-in reciprocity as a key characteristic of the letter genre (79), but Sarah Poustie argues that a letter 'written without *any* intention of exchange or any possibility or reciprocity is still a letter' (6). This debate becomes relevant when I examine fan letters in chapter four, as these epistles more typically exist as singular events with no record that Hardy replied. Nevertheless, I argue that reciprocity – or the hope of this – is still built into the letters. Are these letters, which had little chance of forming a genuine dialogue with Hardy, acts of failed communication, or does the act of writing and posting the original letter still amount to a successful communication? Is the sender's goal achieved even though there is only one side in what we think of as a two-sided process? If so, then this offers support for Stanley's argument that 'reciprocity and exchange [can be removed] as essential requirements' of the letter genre ('Epistolarium' 207). In this thesis, then, it is useful to think of a different set of 'epistolary ethics' (Poustie 14) being applied in each chapter, depending on the type of correspondent, the nature of the communication, and the epistolary network that the letters operate within.

H. 751

14 Oct. 1926.

You have all my sympathy in protesting against  
 Cruel Sports; but I fear that the human race has  
 emerged so little as yet from a state of savagery  
 that not much can be done.

J. H.

Fig. 1. Hardy's pencil draft reply to a letter from Wilfred P. H. Warner (4 October 1926).  
 Dorset County Museum archive, H.751.

## 1.5 Archival Research

When working with a letter collection, a new epistolary relationship develops between researcher and the original correspondents. There is a feeling of intimacy generated from handling the same letters that Hardy first received. Engaging with the immediacy and present-ness of handwriting composed a century or more ago increases this intimacy, especially in an age when word-processed letters have now largely replaced handwritten communication. However, Marlene Kadar warns of the dangers of 'emotional ties' (116, qtd. in N. Stead 42) that emerge when working in the archive, because these may understandably affect interpretations. Therefore, distance and proximity are also considered in relation to the archive itself.

Lisa Stead acknowledges that 'a significant shift has occurred in the way we view archives' (1) so that the archive becomes the subject of study and is given new analytic status' (Stoler 44). Recent critical engagement with the archive as subject includes that of Carrie Smith and Lisa Stead (2013), Ann Laura Stoler (2009), Anita Helle (2007), Carolyn Hamilton et al (2002) and Helen M. Buss and Marlene Kadar (2001). I am not encountering the incoming letters as Hardy did, individually, over a number of years, each with their own specific context, but rather I engage with the letter collection as a whole, as it has been organised and housed within an archive. As Stanley points out, reading the letters in this way 'constitutes an albeit provisional attempt to comprehend an

entirety that never actually existed in the form of “a whole” or a collection’ (‘Epistolarium’ 204-5).

Taking this into account, it is useful to reflect on how the letter collection came to form part of the Hardy archive at Dorset County Museum (DCM). Firstly, what has survived is not the entirety of the letters Hardy received. Hardy may have carefully curated this aspect of his archive before he died, as many letters were destroyed in two bonfires, one before his death, in 1919, and one after, in 1928. As Carl J Weber and Clara Carter Weber explain, the archive collection is ‘only a part, perhaps only a very small part, of Thomas Hardy’s correspondence. That fraction is, however, the part that he was willing to have survive, and the part that Mrs Hardy also allowed to survive’ (11).

On the death of Florence Hardy in 1937, the letters from Max Gate were placed in the keeping of Dorset County Museum, and a Hardy Memorial Room was opened by Poet Laureate, John Masefield, on 10 May 1939. However, it was not until after the end of World War Two that the letters were moved to their new home. When Weber and Weber then produced a *Descriptive Checklist* of the letters in 1968, it was to address the fact that, at that point, the letters had not been ‘methodically catalogued’ and ‘[t]he letters of one correspondent may be found scattered among half a dozen different classifications’ (3). Weber and Weber’s published list offers a one-line entry for each letter, recorded chronologically but with the addition of an alphabetical correspondent index and a separate index of letters relating to Hardy’s works – though this is quite selective. Weber and Weber’s descriptive list remains the only published

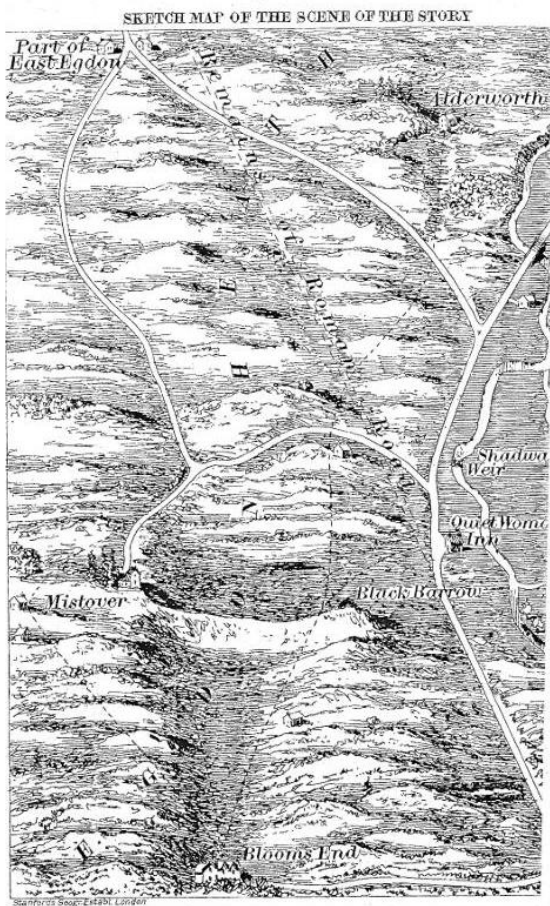


documentation but with regard to internal cataloguing at the Museum, volunteers have worked tirelessly to ensure that there are now twenty-six alphabetised boxes with envelopes containing all of the correspondence from one individual or organisation. One unusual exception to this system is an envelope entitled 'Novels' stored in a box that contains letters from correspondents with surnames beginning with N. This envelope contains most, but not all, of the letters sent about *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, filed together. The project, of which this thesis forms a part, will allow a more comprehensive electronic catalogue to be produced, which will include additional letters acquired after Weber and Weber's guide came out in print and will seek to address some of the archival anomalies as observed in the N box.

Carolyn Steedman refers to archive material as 'selected and consciously chosen documentation from the past' (68). With this collection, Hardy and his second wife, Florence, can be regarded as the first archivists as the material had been carefully managed and reviewed by the couple some nine years before Hardy's death. In 1919, Hardy began working on his autobiography *Life and Work*. Use of personal and professional correspondence to shape and tell the narrative of his life is evident throughout, as Hardy frequently quotes in length from letters he received and the replies he sent. According to Weber and Weber, Hardy had kept old letters in a casual manner prior to the writing of *Life and Work*, but then decided put them into chronological order to make them a serviceable memory aid. Hardy's autobiography reveals which letters Hardy felt were most important to communicate to the public. Hardy selected over fifty of his own letters for quotation in his biography, providing snippets of first-person narrative to lay against the constructed third person discourse. One early

example is his letter to the *Return of the Native* publishers Smith, Elder, to whom he wrote:

I enclose a sketch-map of the supposed scene in which 'The Return of the Native' is laid, copied from the one I used in writing the story; and my suggestion is that we place an engraving of it as frontispiece to the first volume. Unity of place is so seldom preserved in novels that a map of the scene of action is as a rule quite impracticable. But since the present story affords an opportunity of doing so I am of the opinion that it would be a desirable novelty. (30 September 1878, qtd. in LW 125-6)



# THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE

BY  
THOMAS HARDY

AUTHOR OF  
'FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD' 'A PAIR OF BLUE EYES' ETC.

'To sorrow  
I bade good morrow,  
And thought to leave her far away behind;  
But cheerly, cheerly,  
She loves me dearly;  
She is so constant to me, and so kind.  
I would deceive her,  
And so leave her,  
But ah! she is so constant and so kind

IN THREE VOLUMES—VOL. I.

LONDON  
SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE  
1878

[All rights reserved]

Fig. 2. Illustration from the first volume of *The Return of the Native* (Smith, Elder & Co., 1878).

The University of Victoria Libraries Special Collections & University Archives.

One of the defining features of Hardy's fiction was his creation of the part real, part dream world of Wessex, and so this letter provides an intriguing insight into how his final Wessex map came into being (Figure 2).<sup>5</sup> In *Life and Work*, it is followed by an additional piece of tantalising literary trivia: 'The publishers fell in with the idea and the map was made. It was afterwards adopted by R. L. Stevenson in *Treasure Island*' (126).

Letters included in *Life and Work* are from a wide range of people, predominantly those with social significance, such as: Leslie Stephen, Anne Benson Proctor, Coventry Patmore, John Morley, George Gissing, Edmund Gosse and A. C. Swinburne. However, there are also records of Hardy's readers, such as this reference to B. K. Daniels, a teacher in the Philippines, commending Hardy for the creation of *Tess* and *Jude*:

At the end of 1905 a letter reached [Hardy] from a correspondent in the Philippine Islands telling him that to its writer he was "like some terrible old prophet crying in the wilderness". (353)

Keeping and publishing the words of one of Hardy's global readers not only demonstrates the reach of his audience but also highlights how the archive itself retains the physical traces of these readers in social memory, preserving voices that might otherwise be lost from history. In this way, the letter collection becomes so much more than Hardy's personal archive. As Steedman argues, '[t]he Archive then is something that, through the cultural activity of History, can

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<sup>5</sup> Figure 2 is a scanned image of the illustration provided by Philip V. Allingham, <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/hardy/native/1.html>.

become Memory's potential space' (82-3). This informs how interpretation is drawn from surviving documents in the archive. For instance, Hardy chose to retain the letter from Daniels, as it supports the idea that he was perceived positively by readers at the turn of the century. By contrast, in his autobiography, Hardy does acknowledge that many critics and readers were united in their horrified reaction to *Jude the Obscure* (1895):

The onslaught started by the vituperative section of the press [...] was taken up by the anonymous writers of libellous letters and post-cards, and other such gentry. It spread to America and Australia, whence among other appreciations [Hardy] received a letter containing a packet of ashes, which the virtuous writer stated to be those of his wicked novel. (LW 288)

Unsurprisingly, neither this letter, nor the ashes supposedly enclosed, have been retained. In chapter four, I analyse a number of the fan letters that have survived and make the argument that readers' letters offer a challenge to the voice of Hardy's negative critics. However, I acknowledge that the archive has been developed from a process of selection and that the thesis can, in turn, only offer some of the epistolary voices contained in the archive as a whole, though I aim at a representative sample.<sup>6</sup>

In relation to archival studies of letter collections, Sarah Poustie cites Michel de Certeau's (xxvii) argument that:

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<sup>6</sup> This thesis cannot cover the letter collection in its entirety and some limits have been applied. For example, correspondence between Hardy and his wives has not been analysed because the letters of Emma and Florence Hardy have already been published, and the aim of the present research is to focus on unpublished material within the collection. See the *Letters of Emma and Florence Hardy* ed. Michael Millgate New York: Oxford University Press. 1996. Hardy's letters to Emma have also been published, see Weber, Carl. J. ed. *'Dearest Emmie': Thomas Hardy's Letters to his First Wife*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1963.

analysing historical writing is not simply a matter of reading and interpreting but also a political problem relating to how history is made and (re)constructed. (4)

Taking this into consideration, this thesis offers close analyses of selected letters within the collection, acknowledging the difference between 'the real and the discourse', 'the history and the writing' (de Certeau xxvii). Given that what is written in a letter, and how it is written, is determined by the individual relationship between sender and receiver, as well as the precise socio-historic framework (Poustie 4), restoring the original context of epistolary exchange is of vital importance to the present research.

A letter is both an object and a narrative. Meaning and interpretation are enhanced if the original context, including envelopes, postal markings and any enclosures, is also retained in the archive. For example, in the Hardy collection, two letters are preserved with flora from the graves of Keats and Shelley. However, in other instances, enclosures have been separated from their parent discourses. Acknowledging concepts of physicality and materiality, we might ask why an inkstand, sent through the post to Hardy from Florence Henniker, is on display in the Hardy Gallery at Dorset County Museum, when the associated narrative, the letter, is still squirrelled away within the archives and largely unknown to the public:

Your elegant and valuable little present, dear Mrs Henniker, has arrived today, and is being used at once by undeserving me. Many many thanks. I particularly prize it for the initials you have been so thoughtful as to have put on it. They ought to be an inspiration, and will certainly be an ever delightful reminder.

(Hardy to Henniker, 13 September 1893)<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Here I reference the original letter as material object. For the published transcript see *CL* 2: 29.

While the inkstand might be regarded as a significant standalone object, because it represents the writer through his tools, there is greater interpretative potential when it can be observed in the context of the unfolding narrative of Hardy and Henniker's friendship, as I explore in chapter two. As fellow writers, they bonded over shared literary interests, among other things, but the inkstand can also be understood as a symbol of their desire to collaborate, which came to fruition in the publication of a short story, 'The Spectre of the Real' (1894). Previous correspondence had alerted Hardy to the fact that such a present was on its way. In anticipation, he informed Henniker that he was 'oddly enough [...] badly off for inkstands', promising that '[c]ertainly the next big story shall be written from its contents' (10 September 1893, *CL* 2: 30).

In restoring context, the back and forth nature of epistolary communication also needs to be recreated where possible; meaning comes not only from the content on the page but from an understanding of the relationship between participants (see Jolly and Stanley 2005; Poustie 2010). This process alters the reading experience of the researcher, offering something closer to the original life of letters before they became archival documents. Reconstruction can be greatly enhanced by digitisation of an archive.

## 1.6 Digitisation

Lisa Stead (2013) has shown that in the twenty-first century, archival work, whether for preservation or interpretation, also means engagement with digital

possibilities. The importance of the ‘physicality of the original archival document’ is balanced with ‘the virtual qualities of the digitised’ (1). In recent years, there have been a number of open access online correspondence collections, including the *Darwin Correspondence Project*, the *Olive Schreiner Letters Online* and *Women’s Early Modern Letters Online* (WEMLO).<sup>8</sup> This thesis is also accompanied by a digitisation project in which the full corpus of letters written to Hardy between 1860 and 1928 has been photographed and a sample of one hundred letters have been transcribed using text-encoding markup, allowing the research to enter the field of digital scholarship in literary and socio-historical studies.<sup>9</sup>

Digitising the letters in the Hardy collection offers another way to think about distance and proximity, as the virtual representation of each material object brings it closer to a diverse audience across any geographical distance.<sup>10</sup> Given that the letters from Hardy are in print and available online, digitisation does much to restore the dialogue between Hardy and his correspondents, as well as offering preservation and accessibility, and enhancing discoverability of the archive material.

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<sup>8</sup> See *Darwin Correspondence Project*. 2008. <https://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/>; *Olive Schreiner Letters Online*. 2012. <https://www.oliveschreiner.org/>; Women’s Early Modern Letters Online [http://emlo-portal.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/collections/?page\\_id=2595](http://emlo-portal.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/collections/?page_id=2595).

<sup>9</sup> Markup is ‘the denotation of specific positions in a text with some assigned tokens’ (12 Raymond, Tompa, and Wood, qtd. in McGann and Buzzetti 59).

<sup>10</sup> Appendix A provides transcriptions to accompany a number of the high-resolution images of letters which appear in this thesis. These letters have been transcribed in Oxygen – software that accommodates text encoding. Following the Heritage Lottery Funding (HLF) refurbishment of Dorset County Museum, there will be open access to one hundred letters with text-encoded transcriptions.

Michael Hill acknowledges that ‘the proper names of people and organisations are guiding elements in the social construction of most archival collections’ (6). It is possible to enhance this metadata when a collection is digitised. As previously mentioned, in the archive at Dorset County Museum the letters are stored alphabetically by correspondent, whereas Weber and Weber list them chronologically day by day, with an alphabetical index. The first allows you to see the body of correspondence from one individual, as well as that of other individuals within the same family, whereas the second approach presents what Hardy was receiving on the same day from different correspondents. However, digitisation means that the archive can be viewed in both ways at the same time. Knowledge of epistolary networks is deepened as lists of interconnected individuals are continually updated and enhanced through transcription using the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI), and Linked Open Data. TEI is a standard encoding method for representing texts in digital form, especially in the humanities, social sciences and linguistics. Jerome McGann (2001) argues that:

the general field of humanities education and scholarship will not take the use of digital technology seriously until one demonstrates how its tools improve the ways we explore and explain aesthetic works – until, that is, they expand our interpretational procedures. (xii)

In response, this thesis demonstrates how digitisation has supported the (re)construction of networks to answer the research question: what do the letters tell us about Hardy’s place within different social and cultural networks and communities? Each chapter situates Hardy within a different network, and the ability to conduct research concurrently with the creation of the digital database has shed light on sites of interconnection between correspondents.



As scholars have acknowledged, the encoding of the text during transcription transforms it (McGann and Buzzetti 64). I am working with three different types of text in this thesis – the material artefact in the archive, the high resolution digital image of the artefact, and the transcription (Figure 3a; 3b). The digitisation process triggers a change in genre. For example, the transcribed letters have been given titles in the database, which is a feature that sits outside traditional concepts of the genre and is therefore a text transformation. Markup of transcribed letters allows their content to be searchable, while the digital image of the original document ensures that the transcribed text serves to complement, rather than replace, the representation of the material object.

# Letter from Frank Theodore to Thomas Hardy, 19 February 1915

**From:** Frank Theodore (Ashleigh, Marlborough Road, Ashford, Middlesex, 19 February 1915)

**To:** Thomas Hardy

**Physical description:** Folded cream paper

**Source:** Dorset County Museum, H.4609

[Page 1]

Ashleigh Marlborough Road  
Ashford Middlesex

Friday February ye nineteenth 1915.

Dear Master Hardy.

This is not where I really live, but the place whereat our regiment is billeted in training for the Front - myself being a private temporally in the Tenth Middlesex during this awful, though fortunately only transitory time.

I have recently read *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and while I am still in [Page 2]

2

the [way], wish to thank you. I am in rather a difficult position, for as you clearly show in your writings, you do not care what any man thinks of your books. The expression of thanks to you, must be similar to that tendered to a great surgeon by a patient, whose life he has saved under the influence of anaesthetics.

I can only ask you to believe in the sincerity of my appreciation.

[Page 3]

3

I know the country well. My grandfather - *Master John Beard* was Master at the *Port Bredy National Schools* from about 1850 until 1894 and still continued to live in that lovely little town until his death in 1910. With him I spent my holidays walking through the Matchless *Vale of Marshwood* and roaming over *Pilsdon Pen* and *Lewesdon Hill*.

Then again the story is modern, within the period of railways. There [Page 4]

4

is no "wrapping up" in an age of which we know nothing. Not that I wish to depreciate "mystery." That is the lovely charm of Gothic Architecture.

nearest to training for the front - myself being a private temporarily in the Tenth Middlesex during this awful, though fortunately only transitory time. I have recently read Tess of the D'Urbervilles and while I am still in

[Page 2]

the way, wish to thank you. I am in rather a difficult position, for as you clearly show in your writings, you do not care what any man thinks of your books. The expression of thanks to you, must be similar to that tendered to a great surgeon by a patient, whose life he has saved under the influence of anaesthetics. I can only ask you to believe in the sincerity of my appreciation.

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I know the country well. My grandfather - Master John Beard was Master at the Port Bredy National Schools from about 1850 until 1894 and still continued to live in that lovely little town until his death in 1910. With him I spent my holidays walking through the Matchless Vale of Marshwood and roaming over Pilsdon Pen and Lewesdon Hill. Then again the story is modern, within the period of railways. There

**Fig. 3a. Text-encoded transcript of a letter from Frank Theodore to Hardy (19 February 1915: 1-4). University of Exeter, H. 4609.**

```

<TEI xmlns="http://www.tei-c.org/ns/1.0" xml:id="dhe-hl-h.4609">

  <title>Letter from Frank Theodore, expressing his enjoyment of Tess of the d'Urbervilles and
  relating some of his experiences of living in Dorset. 19 February 1915</title>
  <author ref="#ps:FrankTheodore">Frank Theodore</author>
  <editor ref="#resp-HA">Helen Angear</editor>
  <funder>Arts and Humanities Research Council</funder>
  <sponsor>University of Exeter</sponsor>
  <sponsor>Dorset County Museum</sponsor>
  <principal>Angelique Richardson</principal>

  [...]

  <correspAction type="sent">
    <persName ref="#ps:FrankTheodore">Frank Theodore</persName>
    <placeName ref="#pl:MarlboroughRoad">Ashleigh, Marlborough Road, Ashford,
  Middlesex</placeName>

  [...]

  <date when="1915-02-19">Friday February ye nineteenth 1915.</date>
    </correspAction>
    <correspAction type="received">
      <persName ref="#ps:TH">Thomas Hardy</persName>
    </teiHeader>
    <text>
      <body>
        <div type="letter">
          <pb n="1" facs="uoedh_hl_h.4609_1.jpg"/>
          <opener>

  [...]

    <dateline><date when="1915-02-19">Friday February ye nineteenth 1915.</date></dateline>
    <salute>Dear Master Hardy.</salute>
    </opener>

    <p>This is not where I really live, but the place whereat our regiment is billeted in training for the
  Front - myself being a private temporally in the Tenth
  Middlesex during this awful, though fortunately only transitory time.</p>

```

Fig. 3b. TEI markup of the letter from Frank Theodore to Hardy (19 February 1915: 1-4). University of Exeter, H. 4609.

## 1.7 Chapter Overviews

Different epistolary communities or networks are explored in each chapter of this thesis. The first section, comprising chapters one and two, explores how correspondence can sustain individual connections, and whether the epistolary form provides a space for mental proximity which exists somewhere between the private and public. The second section, chapters three, four and five, continues to pursue the question of how a sense of self is collaboratively constructed by sender and recipient within correspondence, this time in relation to geographical, temporal but also literary distance, as well as perceived proximity.

In chapter one I explore how Hardy's friendship, and professional relationship, with the critic and writer Edmund Gosse can be traced through his epistolary communications. I argue that the intimate space of individual correspondence was often a successful way to distinguish what was only shared by two friends in the context of multiple acquaintances.

The first chapter examines how both the material culture and etiquette of letter-writing enhance a line of connection between two friends who write to one another across physical and temporal distances. This is particularly evident in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century correspondence as the writing and reading of letters formed an essential part of Victorian and Edwardian friendship. Working as a suspended conversation, each epistolary text allows

the reader and writer to participate in both initiation and response. Letter-writing fed into the contemporary belief in the moral worth of engaging in stimulating discussion, in which conversation was regarded as ‘crucial for producing [social and political] *action*’ (Weliver 96; italics in original). Letters were also viewed as a form of portable affection, creating intimacy at the level of individual words and phrases. References to friendship expressed conceptual bonds between two people within a shared narrative.

The chapter draws on the substantial number of Gosse’s original letters in the archive, allowing this understudied side of the correspondence to be discussed in new and precise detail. What the letters between Gosse and Hardy bear out is a blurring between the personal and the professional. I argue that Gosse used his dual position as critic and friend to develop a greater closeness with Hardy-the-writer in a self-constructed identity as his ‘ideal reader’. As this construct is developed within their epistolary exchanges, it becomes dependent on Hardy’s willingness, in turn, to reflect this back in his perception of Gosse. In this way, epistolary exchange is regarded as a collaborative venture, shaped by two participants. Epistolary dialogues between Gosse and Hardy emerge as a form of shared writing that shifts the genre boundaries of both the familiar letter and the literary review.

Chapter two examines shifting conceptions of friendship between the sexes from the 1890s to the 1920s. I argue that private correspondence played a crucial role in developing and maintaining heterosocial friendships in, and

beyond, the Victorian period. Victor Luftig (1993) suggests that platonic friendship between the sexes ‘challenged the boundaries of socially acknowledged interaction’ (3) in the late nineteenth century; my second chapter extends the discussion by examining epistolary interaction. The social valence of the letter offered potential freedom from prevalent gender categories within bourgeois discourse, enabling more intimate permutations of heterosocial relations to emerge. Analysis of the correspondence between Hardy and fellow writer Florence Henniker reveals how relations between the sexes moved beyond restrictive gender codes in the private sphere.

Within the chapter, I also focus on how Hardy and Henniker’s friendship was strengthened by their shared interest in animal advocacy. This opens out to a wider exploration of the social networks that can be traced through correspondence between men and women involved in animal welfare campaigns at the turn of the century. In this way, my thesis contributes to scholarship on Hardy’s engagement with science and humanitarian issues. Hardy’s work in relation to Darwin has gained critical attention since the publication of Gillian Beer’s *Darwin’s Plots* (1983; third edn 2009), Roger Ebbatson (1982), John Holmes (2009), Richardson (2010 and 2013), Phillip Mallett (2013), and George Levine (1988 and 2017). Beer reminds us that, for Hardy, ‘Darwin [was] always a major intellectual influence in his work and his way of seeing’ (222). As an extension of this research, there have been a number of recent studies focussing on Hardy and animals, including the work of Elisha Cohn (2010) and Anna West’s monograph *Thomas Hardy and Animals*, published in 2017. West explores the ways in which Hardy uses ‘moments of encounter’ between ‘human and nonhuman’ (2) animals in his novels to engage

with post-Darwinian questions regarding human responsibility to, and connection with, other creatures. Citing Hardy's letter to the Humanitarian League in 1910, in which Hardy states that the discovery of the law of evolution had 'shifted the centre of altruism from humanity to the whole conscious world collectively', West asks: How did [Hardy's] sense of compassion inform his representation of these animals, human and nonhuman? (3).

In answering this question, West offers close readings of Hardy's literature, primarily his novels, but also draws on his letters as contextual references. She provides a close analysis of the draft of one of Hardy's letters to the Humanitarian League to examine how the choice of language and reframing 'shows Hardy's efforts to grasp and articulate the subject' (1) in precise terms.

My thesis extends this approach, engaging in close language analysis of the correspondence between Hardy and Florence Henniker as a fellow animal welfare reformist. Hardy's attitude to animal welfare, and his involvement in potential reformist action, can be further understood by a study of epistolary networks as correspondence was one of the ways in which communities with shared world views could build momentum, much as social media facilitates this in more visible ways in today's society. While animal advocacy has been acknowledged as a shared interest of Hardy and Florence Henniker in previous studies, and namely by Richard Sylvia (2011) and Hardy biographers, Henniker's name does not appear in general socio-historical analyses of animal rights during this period. Chapter two contributes to a greater understanding of how Henniker's contributions to animal advocacy might be placed alongside those of more well-known female figures, such as Leisa Schartau and Louise (Lizzy) Lind-af-Hageby.

In section two, Hardy's correspondence with younger writers and his fans is examined in relation to concepts of geographical, temporal and literary distance, as well as perceived proximity in letter-writing.

In chapter three I argue that the correspondence between Hardy and younger writers of the early twentieth century reveals ways in which he was perceived as a paternal literary figure. As Middleton Murry wrote in one letter to Hardy, many of the new writers wished 'to sail under your flag' (3 March 1919). I argue that Hardy's expressed concerns for the future, alongside his ongoing interest in other writers and his keen desire to remain informed of current trends of thought, meant that the new generation perceived him not only as one of the literary greats, but as someone who would be receptive to their desire to communicate with him. Perhaps in some cases there might have been an additional awareness that Hardy's correspondence would survive after his death, and by writing to him they would secure a place in the history of his life. If so, did this affect the way they wrote about themselves and Hardy in their letters? I argue that, by positioning themselves in relation to Hardy as a literary father-figure, the younger generation of writers wished to be linked to Hardy as a point of influence and to be compared to him in terms of their own literary prowess. Middleton Murry referred to him as a 'champion' of the new generation of writers, declaring: 'you and your work are the embodiment of those qualities for which we are determined to fight in English Literature' (3 March 1919). Given Hardy's age and his declining health in the 1920s, these letters suggest some new writers established a sense of purpose for their writing in carrying on the 'fight' for what Murry refers to as 'spiritual candour' in



literature (3 March 1919). I argue that their ability to converse with Hardy through letters allowed these writers to seek affirmation and guidance in their mission.

The chapter examines Hardy's epistolary dialogues with various young writers during the period 1914 to 1928, with a particular focus on Siegfried Sassoon, John Middleton Murry, Virginia Woolf and Ezra Pound. By focusing on the letter form, I aim to show how this space was an important bridge between knowing Hardy through his writing and meeting him in person. Given the emotional valence of the letter form, writers such as Murry and Woolf used the space to reveal to Hardy how anxious they were in communicating with him. For Murry, letter-writing was a more nerve-wracking experience than meeting Hardy in person. This may have been due to the permanency of writing or the difficulty of conveying a true sense of self in this form. The vulnerability of the sender is explored in this chapter, and I contend that this was, in part, a deliberate way in which senders could position themselves as Hardy's literary progeny.

The last two chapters present a study of Hardy's fan mail. The archived collection reveals a marked increase in the number of letters Hardy received as he became established as a popular novelist, particularly after the publication of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* in 1891. The spread of Hardy's writing across the world can be traced through the global fan mail he received – including correspondence from Australia, Canada, Chile, China, Egypt, France, Germany, India, Ireland, Japan, New Zealand, Nigeria, the Philippines, South Africa, Syria, Tasmania and the USA. In chapter four I argue that personal correspondence

reduced the distance between a venerated writer and members of the public across the world, as the letter form provided a more intimate layer within an emerging fan culture. New degrees of access to authors reduced the perceived power of the professional critic to speak for readers. Such correspondence had a personal effect on Hardy, who had previously received numerous negative reviews; he was able to gain a much more direct sense of readers' opinions. Again, personal correspondence provided a space between the private and the public in which both writer and reader could negotiate a perceived sense of self.

The postal reform of 1840, followed by the establishment of a World Postal Union some three decades later in 1874, enabled anyone to send a letter to a recipient they did not know, no matter the distance, and epistolary etiquette allowed a stranger to enter the personal world of the author. This is often acknowledged within the fan letters sent to Hardy, with the sender declaring himself or herself a stranger at the start of the epistle but then moving on to claim a closer relationship through sustained reading of Hardy's work, even that of friendship. While intimacy with a writer might be part of reader experience more generally, the opportunity to communicate directly with writers, from any part of the world, increased this feeling and gave legitimacy to perceived connections between reader and writer.

In the final chapter, I move on to examine literary tourism and reader perceptions of Wessex in relation to fan mail. Given the transnational reach of the letters Hardy received, chapter five contributes to scholarship on the global impact of Hardy and his work. It complements and extends Richardson's

discussion of the ways in which Hardy's work found new audiences through translation and circulation in 'A Global Hardy' (2016). It also supports Rena Jackson's argument that Hardy's prose challenges ideas of a harmonised imperial identity and develops Jane Bownas's study *Hardy and Empire* (2012).<sup>11</sup> While Jackson and Bownas focus primarily on Hardy's poetry and prose, chapters four and five use the letters as significant cultural documents that contribute to our understanding of public perceptions of Hardy and the place of the writer in international culture.

Often Hardy's readers refer to their own concepts and constructs of Wessex in their letters to him. Richardson notes that, in turning to 'South West England for his inspiration and exploration of social relations', Hardy presented 'an objection to colonialism and imperial exploration' ('Global Hardy' 123), emphasising 'regional specificity' at the same time as valuing 'international exchange' and 'cultural dialogue' ('Global Hardy' 123). I argue that, in readers' letters, writing about Wessex offered a point of connection between reader and writer; within the space of the letter, the reader is able to express ideas about Wessex as they imagine and understand it. This opportunity is particularly significant when examining letters sent from areas within the British Empire, as it provides a concept of Britain as a country that could be creatively re-written and re-imagined by both writer and non-native reader.

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<sup>11</sup> For Rena Jackson's discussion of how Hardy's prose challenge ideas of a harmonised imperial identity, see 'India and Social Mobility in Hardy's Early Fiction' in *The Thomas Hardy Journal*. 30 (2014): 13-33 and 'Hybridity and Migrancy in *Jude the Obscure*: A Postcolonial Reading of Father Time' in *The Thomas Hardy Journal*. 25 (Autumn 2009): 106-26.

## 2. At the writer's desk: author-critic collaboration through the epistolary medium

I hold it a very great privilege that so many years of my life have run parallel with those of one whom I admire so whole-heartedly as I do you: and I would pray (if I knew a God to pray to) that we may yet have a goodly term of life to spend in a friendship so precious to me.

Edmund Gosse to Thomas Hardy, 3 June 1910

Epistolary exchange is a collaborative venture, shaped by two participants, in which every letter in the chain is both an initiation and a response to a knowing and familiar reader. Sending and receiving letters formed part of daily life in the nineteenth and much of the twentieth centuries. Time had to be set aside to invest in what was an elaborate system of communication and etiquette. Letter exchanges functioned as suspended conversations, feeding into the belief in the character-building effect of engaging in stimulating discussion (Hookway 160-161). A companion's epistolary reflections, much like the interior of a diary, could also reveal the morals and principles of a person's character. Through the pages of a letter, writer and recipient were able to explore aspects of the self and other. There are crucial elements which D.A. Gerber suggests fundamentally sustain an epistolary connection (315). This includes a variety of techniques employed to generate intimacy, including 'self-revelation, humour, the sharing of secrets, [and] the establishment of informal agreements' (315). These are acts which willingly share the self with another and reveal a desire for psychological identification. In this chapter I situate epistolary exchange within a broader framework of collaborative writing practices. A growing field of criticism

within eighteenth- and nineteenth-century life-writing seeks to move away from focussing on 'the single subject in writing the lives of figures from the Romantic and Victorian periods' (James and North 133).<sup>12</sup> Restoring epistolary dialogue is a particularly effective way of joining lives together and this chapter makes a significant contribution to 'new readings of collaboration in theory and practice' (James and North 133). However, while there is a growing interest in this approach, there were earlier critical shifts in the 1960s and 1990s. For example, Martin Cohen edited a collection of letters from the nineteenth-century writer Rudyard Kipling to Rider Haggard in 1965, which was published with the subtitle 'The Record of a Friendship' and F.B. Pinion published *Thomas Hardy: His Life and Friends* in 1992 as a biography 'with emphasis on Hardy's friendships' (viii).

Taking Hardy's correspondence with Edmund Gosse — critic, poet and biographer — as a case study, I explore how their lives can be written together within two distinct 'spaces and places of interaction' (James and North 133): letters and literary reviews. In this chapter I read their epistolary discussions as 'allusive dialogues' (James and North 134) that re-surface in Gosse's published review writing. I argue that letter exchanges between an author and a critic, who are also close friends, disturb genre boundaries between personal and published texts. As such, perceived distances between writer and critic, and between the literary text and its review, are reduced.

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<sup>12</sup> See e.g. Felicity James and Julian North, 'Writing Lives Together'; Lynn M. Linder, 'Co-Constructed Selves'; and Daisy Hay, *Mr and Mrs Disraeli*.

Hardy's friendships within a network of literary figures can be traced through his epistolary communications. In these he conversed on a wide array of subjects, ranging from the everyday of bicycling and pets to the abstract of philosophical truths, alongside a core thread of discussion about the critical reception of his work. By way of introduction to this chapter, A.E. Housman's brief epistle (Figure 4a; 4b) provides an apt example of the light-hearted letters Hardy sometimes received from friends, which sustained non-familial relationships as part of epistolary gift exchange:

The first Saturday in August is the 4<sup>th</sup>, so if I am alive I hope you will see me then: but at present my tenure of existence is more than usually precarious, as I am learning the bicycle. (11 July 1900)

As well as fellow writers, Hardy maintained close friendships with a number of prominent critics who elected to review his works. For Weber and Weber, Hardy's correspondence with Edmund Gosse is one of the defining elements of the letter collection held in Dorset County Museum: 'Hardy wrote to Gosse with a freedom and an uninhibitedness that does not characterise his other letters' (23). However, this is at odds with Ralph Pite's view that Hardy's friendships with other men in the literary world were often of either a superficial or a 'gladiatorial' nature (390). This chapter explores the role of epistolary friendships in the life of the professional writer: how did letter conversations create a sense of community and collaboration between writers and their critics? In what ways was there creative interplay between private and public textual relations of author and reviewer? As Felicity James and Julian North argue, '[b]ringing such broader exchanges into view helps us to understand life writing as a dynamic expression of relationship within social networks of writers and readers, rather than as the consecration of individual identity' (134). Given

the multiplicity of voices preserved within the letter collection, this archival study calls for a dynamic approach to be taken.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Felicity James and Julian North note that the expanding critical field of collaborative life writing has 'led to acts of biographical and bibliographical recovery which question traditional canonical boundaries' (134). The accompanying digital project contributes to this as text encoding allows biographical markup to draw on a network of open access authority lists, including VIAF but also Wikipedia. As Wikipedia is a work-in-progress encyclopaedia that allows the online community to contribute, it challenges traditional boundaries, with both positive and negative consequences.

17 North Road <sup>a. e. Housman -</sup>  
Highgate N. <sup>"Shropshire  
Lad"</sup>  
11 July 1900.  
  
Dear Mr Hardy.  
  
I shall be very  
pleased to come, and the  
date you suggest will suit  
me excellently. The first  
Saturday in August is the

Fig. 4a. Letter from A.E. Housman to Hardy (11 July 1900: 1).  
Dorset County Museum archive, H.3495.



4<sup>th</sup>, so if I am alive I  
hope you will see me then;  
but at present my tenure of  
existence is more than usually  
precarious, as I am learning  
the bicycle.

I am yours very truly

A. E. Housman.

Fig. 4b. Letter from A.E. Housman to Hardy (11 July 1900: 2).  
Dorset County Museum archive, H.3495.

Initially I approach Edmund Gosse and Thomas Hardy as single subjects, in the way of offering traditional biographical summaries of two prominent nineteenth-century literary figures. However, I then present the pair in dialogue. Looking at Gosse and Hardy together challenges what John Mee refers to as ‘the twinned myths of the isolated author and the solitary reader’ (315, qtd. in James and North 134).

Epistolary friendships between Gosse and Andrew Lang, and Gosse and Henry James, have been examined by Marysa Demoor (1987) and Mhairi Pooler (2014) respectively. From these studies it is clear that epistolary communication was a particularly important way for Gosse to sustain literary friendships. Demoor describes a ‘fruitful collaboration’ between Lang and Gosse in which their letters ‘bear witness to an active give and take relationship’ (492; 502). However, both Pooler and Demoor present only one side of the correspondence. Pooler acknowledges that ‘[w]e can only guess at Gosse’s side of the discussion [with Henry James], but these letters nonetheless give the impression of a dialogue on literary matters between authors (and friends) in which criticism is delicate and praise effusive’ (79). By contrast, in this chapter elements of dialogue are reconstructed. A substantial number of Gosse’s original letters to Hardy exist in the archive, spanning a period of almost five decades. By merging the archive material with Hardy’s published letters, it is possible to use their correspondence as a ‘patchwork narrative’ (Pooler 78) to re-examine some of the critical questions about the nature and depth of friendship between a writer and critic. This approach revitalises the convention of double narrative biographies that were common practice in the period itself.

Within this context, I seek to understand Gosse and Hardy's correspondence as the foundation of a creative relationship.

For Gosse, there seems almost a predestined element to his friendship with Hardy, due to their Dorset connection. In a letter from January 1920, he recalls his boyhood time spent in Weymouth, when his father was conducting marine life research and wonders 'if I ever brushed up against a big boy called T.H., as my Mother took me in her hand along the streets of Weymouth in 1853?' (18 January 1920). Their shared affinity with Dorset created an immediate bond between them and this element of their friendship was sustained by Gosse's visits back to Dorset. When Hardy built Max Gate in the 1880s, he quickly wrote to tell Gosse that there was a guest bedroom for him to stay in. From this point, Gosse was one of his regular visitors, eager to explore features of the landscape with Hardy as tour guide. Hardy often developed closer bonds with friends through outdoor adventure. In a letter to Edward Clodd in 1895, Hardy refers to 'that really rash jump you took in the dark on the heath' (10 November 1895, *CL* 2: 92-93), for instance. The earliest letter in DCM's collection is that of Horace Moule writing to Hardy, probably in 1860, in which he suggests going for a walk together:

Dear Tom,

Will you walk ~~on Friday~~ tomorrow night? If so call here at 6 ½.

Yrs ever

H M Moule

(n.d. c.1860)<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Unpublished letters are quoted as found, without correction. Punctuation and spelling as in original.

Weber and Weber suggest that ‘Gosse was easily the most successful ‘in “drawing Hardy out”’ (23), and this is an important thread to trace through their forty-seven-year dialogue.<sup>15</sup> What the letters bear out is a blurring between the personal and the professional, as Gosse was both a valued friend and literary ally. There is a duality in their relationship which is on the one hand that of two friends who experienced parallel lives in London and Dorset and, on the other, that of critic and author in the public sphere.

## **2.1 Edmund Gosse, the sociable reader**

Edmund Gosse has accrued something of a reputation as professional friend to the most prominent male literary personalities of the latter half of the nineteenth century (Figure 5). Not only Hardy, but also Henry James, Robert Louis Stevenson, W. D. Howells, Andrew Lang, Arthur Symonds, Arthur Benson and Algernon Swinburne were among Gosse’s closest friends. Gosse facilitated salon-style gatherings at his London home, Delamere Terrace, on Sundays and was also a prolific letter-writer. He initially pursued a life as a poet, but, while Hardy is one of the canonical authors and poets of the nineteenth-century, Gosse is remembered more for his critical material. He worked as assistant librarian at the British Museum from 1867 and was employed at the Board of Trade as a translator for almost thirty years. In 1904 he was appointed as the librarian of the House of Lords Library. While he had not attended university himself, he also lectured in English literature at Trinity College, Cambridge.

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<sup>15</sup> Hardy met Gosse in the late 1870s but the letters in the archive cover a period from 1880 to 1927.

Gosse became renowned as a literary reviewer and a successful American lecture tour ensured that he was regarded highly in his field by the time he met Hardy. As well as his literary interests, Gosse established himself as a biographer and his memoir, *Father and Son* (1907), is considered one of the first in a subgenre of psychological biography. Through his friendship with the sculptor Hamo Thornycroft, Gosse also became an authority in art history criticism.



Fig. 5. Portrait of Edmund Gosse, c. 1895. Cassell's Universal Portrait Gallery.

## 2.2 Thomas Hardy, the not so isolated author

Hardy began his career as an architect's apprentice, working first in Dorset before moving to London to continue his pupillage. However, once he decided to end his career as an architect and concentrate fully on writing, he became part of what John Picker refers to as 'the burgeoning professional caste' of 'housebound professionals' (428). This group included writers, artists and philosophers whose place of work, the study, was situated within the home, and separated from the sociability of office environments. Hardy appears to have thrived on the communal aspects of office-working when he trained as an architect and I wonder whether, by contrast, the writer's study was a place that was at times, a little too insular? While Thomas Carlyle designed a soundproof study in which to write, Hardy appears to have welcomed exterior stimulation. In contrast to Carlyle, Hardy's autobiography reveals how street music was one of the highlights of the time he spent writing in London:

Mrs Hardy related that during this summer [of 1878], she could not tell exactly when, she looked out of the window at the back of the house, and saw her husband running without a hat down Broderick Road, and disappearing round a corner into a bye-street. Before she had done wondering what could have happened he returned, and all was explained. While sitting in his writing-room he had heard a street barrel-organ of the kind that used to be called a "harmoni-flute", playing somewhere near at hand the very quadrille over which the jaunty young man who had reached the end of his time at Hicks's had spread such a bewitching halo more than twenty years earlier, by describing the glories of dancing round to its beats on the Cremorne platform or at the Argyle Rooms, and which Hardy had never been able to identify. (LW 126)

In *Life and Work* there are other entries, such as the following from 1885, which reveal moments when introspection may have led to depression for Hardy:

Nov. 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>. In a fit of depression, as if enveloped in a leaden cloud. Have gone back to my original plot for 'The Woodlanders' after all. Am

working from half-past ten a.m. to twelve p.m., to get my mind made up on the details. (182)

By contrast, Hardy describes John Hicks' office, where he was apprenticed in 1856, in a lively manner, demonstrating the easy companionship to be found in such environments:

The architect's office was at 39 South Street, Dorchester [...] a house which happened to be next door to that of Barnes the Dorset poet and philologist. On arriving Thomas found there a pupil of twenty-one, who was at the end of his term and was just leaving; also a pupil in the first year of his articles, a year or more older than himself, who had been well educated at a good school in or near London, and who, having a liking for the classical tongues, regretted his recent necessity of breaking off his studies to take up architecture. They began later to read together, and during the ensuing two or three years often gave more time to books than drawing. (*LW* 32)

Hardy used his spare time to study Greek and Latin and he enjoyed discussing what he studied, not only with the other apprentices, but also with Hicks. With the poet and philologist William Barnes just next door, Hardy was enveloped in an atmosphere of stimulating company. When he was then taken on by Arthur Blomfield in London, his life as an architect continued to be a very companionable one:

Among other strange ways in which he and his pupils, including Hardy, used to get on with their architecture was by singing glees and catches at intervals during office hours. Having always been musically inclined and, as has been stated, a fiddler of countless jigs and reels in his boyhood, he could sing at sight with moderate accuracy from notation though his voice was not strong. Hence Blomfield welcomed him in the office choir [...]. (*LW* 47)

It is perhaps surprising, then, that Hardy's perception of his early life in London was negative at times. He described himself as 'an isolated student in London' and became ill when he was away from the countryside for too long (*LW* 54).

Once Hardy was in a position to make writing a full-time occupation, he was able to return to Dorchester. However, this meant that his working hours were far more solitary.

Unlike writers in the city, Hardy was not confined just to his study, though. The outdoors offered an alternative work space whenever he needed inspiration:

So Hardy went on writing *Far from the Madding Crowd* – sometimes indoors, sometimes out – when he would occasionally find himself without a scrap of paper at the very moment that he felt volumes. In such circumstances he would use large dead leaves, white chips left by the wood-cutters, or pieces of stone or slate that came to hand. He used to say that when he carried a pocket-book his mind was barren as Sahara. (98-99)

Resisting the conventional image of the enclosed Victorian writer, Hardy was perhaps able to merge some aspects of his self that previously he had felt were at odds with each other. Hardy described living a ‘triple existence [...] a life twisted of three strands – the professional life, the scholar’s life, and the rustic life’ (36). Nevertheless, the writer’s study was closely bound up with professional identity and Hardy did spend long hours working within this space. Picker argues that ‘[s]cholars have not fully attended either to the unique spatial status of these members of Victorian [...] society or to the ramifications of that status for their sense of professional identity’ (429). Working with the idea of ‘the home as a critical, if problematic, site of identity’ (Picker 441), I explore how correspondence from other literary professionals might have been a mitigating factor, creating a sense of collegial identity for the Victorian writer in his study. I argue that epistolary communication provided a flow of conversations in and out of the physical work space, bolstering ideas of community and collaboration. In



particular, I look at this from the point of view of how writer and reviewer could work in relative proximity, despite physical, temporal and critical distance.

Hardy regularly entertained friends at his London residence in Upper Tooting, and at his Dorset home, Max Gate, but, in between social visits, letters ensured that close friendships could be sustained on an almost daily basis. Regular correspondence maintained sociability as ‘the interrupted presence of [friends was] in a sense ‘joined’ by letters that maintain the flow of contact, exchange, chatter and so forth that would have taken place (in somewhat different ways) when present with each other face-to-face’ (Stanley 137-138). Even before the 1840 postal reform, the essayist William Hazlitt recorded savouring the sound of the letter-bell – rung to announce the last collection of the day – and the anticipation of the postman’s knock, which restored ‘a sense of belonging in a human network’ (306); letter exchanges countered a fear of urban anonymity and disconnection that grew in magnitude through the nineteenth century:

As I write this, the Letter-Bell passes; it has a lively, pleasant sound with it [...] It strikes upon the ear, it vibrates to the brain, it wakes me from the dream of time, it flings me back upon my first entrance into life, the period of my first coming up to town, when all around was strange, uncertain, adverse – a hubbub of confused noises, a chaos of shifting objects – and when this sound alone, startling me with the recollection of a letter I had to send to the friends I had lately left, brought me as it were to myself, made me feel that I had links still connecting me with the universe, and gave me hope and patience to persevere. (Hazlitt 301-302)

As a form of support for a writer, letters had the advantage that they could be attended to at the point in a day that was most convenient for the individual.

This enabled Hardy to work at a distance from London, whilst remaining connected within a network of authors, editors, publishers, reviewers and

illustrators. As an example, one entry in *Life and Work* refers to two letters dealing with matters of work and friendship arriving on the same day: 'Nov. 25<sup>th</sup> [1885] Letter from John Morley [probably about *The Woodlanders*, he being the editor of Macmillan's Magazine in which it was to appear]; and one from Leslie Stephen, with remarks on books he had read between whiles' (182; brackets in original). Leslie Stephen was a friend, editor and mentor to Hardy and his letters are another significant element of the archived collection (Figure 6a; 6b).

22, HYDE PARK GATE,  
S.W.

25. 11. 85

My dear Mr Hardy,

It was very kind of you to write  
to me. - I am glad to have got  
that book off my hands, though  
any vacuum in my occupations  
is very soon filled up (not that  
my nature abhors it!) and though  
in many ways I am very ill  
satisfied with the result. However  
I must well & I can now  
begin to forget it.

Fig. 6a. Letter from Leslie Stephen to Hardy (25 November 1885: 1).  
Dorset County Museum archive, H.5520.

H. 5520

Few things in all my Cornhill period  
 gave me so much pleasure as  
 my relations with you. As  
 for advice, I am sure I at my only  
 advice must have been to be  
 yourself. It is all that I ever  
 care to say to any good writer.  
 If ever you come to town, I should be  
 very glad to see you either here or  
 at 15 W'loo Place where I always  
 am in the afternoon.

Yours very truly  
 L. Stephen

Fig. 6b. Letter from Leslie Stephen to Hardy (25 November 1885: 2).  
 Dorset County Museum archive, H.5520.



However, while Hardy's entry in his autobiography demonstrated an effective postal infrastructure, a decade earlier it would have been difficult for Hardy to work from a Dorset-based desk. In 1872 Leslie Stephen – at the time the editor of the *Cornhill* – had written to Hardy to request a serial story for the magazine. *Life and Work* reveals that:

[i]t was, indeed, by the merest chance that he had ever got the *Cornhill* letter at all. The postal arrangements in Dorset were still so primitive at this date that the only delivery of letters at Hardy's father's house was by the hands of some friendly neighbour who had come from the next village; and Mr Stephen's request for a story had been picked up in the mud of the lane by a labouring man, the schoolchildren to whom it had been entrusted having dropped it on the way. (98)

By contrast, there were twelve daily deliveries operating across London by this time, with an average of six in other suburban areas.<sup>16</sup> Luckily, by the 1880s Dorchester at least was becoming more and more connected to the city and post could be received in a reliable manner.

Despite the tendency in the digital age to refer to postal communication as 'snail mail', the sense of immediacy offered by the Penny Post played a significant role in establishing and maintaining connections between people which spanned a 'wide field of strong attachment' (Hardy, *Jude* 201). What emerges is a greater understanding of the value placed on written communication within Victorian society; alongside the wealth of periodicals that circulated at the time, increased epistolary communication encouraged discussion — myriad voices were debating a variety of topics in both published and private discourse.

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<sup>16</sup> See M. J. Daunt, *Royal Mail: the Post Office Since 1840*. London: Athlone, 1985.

James How explores the impact of the ‘epistolary space’ that emerged after the creation of the Post Office in the 1650s, demonstrating how letters provided their writers with an arena in which to ‘become involved as active participants in key historical events’ (2). The letter form encouraged the process of externalising thoughts onto the page and in this chapter I examine how words moved from and merged with private and public forms of communication.

### **2.3 Letters as conversations**

A consistent recommendation in the letter-writing manuals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was to write a letter as a conversation ‘just consider what you would say to your friend if he was present, and write down the very words you would speak’ (Fordyce 24). However, this does not acknowledge the dislocated nature of the letter form. As a suspended conversation, the way in which several threads of a conversation are placed as incomplete illocutionary acts within a single text is a convention unique to this type of communication. This can be seen by merging a letter from Hardy, dated 18 February 1918, with Gosse’s reply three days later (Figure 7).<sup>17</sup> Co-operative dialogue is anticipated on both sides and each individual letter exists as an incomplete text until the next response is constructed, sent and received.

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<sup>17</sup> When merging the two letters, I have presented Hardy’s letter in full and brought in parts of Gosse’s reply (21 February 1918) at relevant points. Quotations from Gosse’s letter are presented in blue.

MAX GATE, | DORCHESTER. | Feb 18: 1918.

My dear Gosse:

I am puzzled about the date of "The Widow," (or as it is called in the Wessex Edn "The Widow Betrothed"). Anyhow, though I thought of it about 1867 when looking at the house described, which is near here, it must have been written after I had read Wordsworth's famous preface to Lyrical Ballads, which influenced me much, & influences the style of the poem, as you can see for yourself. I am afraid that is all I can recall.

Your last letter has given me great satisfaction, for I had spotted of my own accord the influence on you of Wordsworth's first preface.

"Moments of Vision" has run the gauntlet of the papers by now, & I feel in no bright spirits about it, though perhaps upon the whole it was just as well to print it. I don't mean that the book has not been kindly received — far from it — but the lack of grasp in the people who write "notices" is disconcerting. One wonders why they quiz the author rather than review the book. In their super-preciosity, I notice, they still think literary form of more importance to poetry than vision, & that it is more damning to show absence of "poetic diction" in a poem of which it can be said "This is Life", than to show "This is not Life" in a poem which can boast of poetic diction.

You ought not to regard what the ignorant say about "lack of form". Your form is abundant, excellent and deserving of careful analysis. It is one of your strong points. Without "form", poetry is void, and it is part of your genius as a poet that you are always so interesting linguistically & prosodically. I am dwelling on this matter with some elaboration in my "Edinburgh Review".

For the relief of my necessities, as the Prayer Book puts it, I began writing novels, & made a sort of trade of it; but last night I found that I had spent more years in verse-writing than at prose-writing! (prose 25 1/2 yrs — verse 26 yrs) Yet my verses will always be considered a bye-product, I suppose, owing to this odd accident of the printing press.

It is quite true that the press still irritatingly treat your poetry as a by-product. But be patient: time will set that straight.

Who made the selection from your poems? It excludes a number of my greatest favourites, and I don't understand its principal selection.

We have been reading the Life of Keats, & found it very saddening. It seems to be an honest & thorough book, but Colvin has not the knack of lighting up his subject I fear.

I bought the "Life of Keats", but I find it to be dull, overloaded with triviality and conscientiousness. It is a Blue Book about Keats.

I hope you & your household are not caused shocks & shudders by the week end visits you get overhead.

Behold the shamelessness with which my blushing pen whispers 'Do write me another of your precious & illuminating letters!'

Always yours, Thomas Hardy.

Always yours, Edmund Gosse

Fig. 7. Epistolary dialogue between Thomas Hardy and Edmund Gosse, 18-21 February 1918.

This exchange is representative of much of the Gosse-Hardy discourse. Hardy provides details about his work in response to Gosse's personal and professional interest. Written in 1918, Hardy was focusing on publishing poetry by this point but he still faced the same challenges of critical reception as with his novels. He laments to Gosse about 'the lack of grasp in the people who write "notices"' and wondering why 'they quiz the author rather than review the book' (18 February 1918, *CL* 5: 253-254). In his reply Gosse shows that he is able to appreciate Hardy's 'genius as a poet' (21 February 1918) and demonstrates his investment in Hardy as friend and writer by referring to his plans to review Hardy's poetry in his *Edinburgh Review* piece. This prompts Gosse to pose further questions to Hardy at the end of his letter, ensuring that the exchange is sustained. Gosse wrote a number of reviews of Hardy's novels, including critiques of *The Woodlanders* (1887), *Jude the Obscure* (1895) and *The Well-Beloved* (1897) during the early stages of their friendship; by the turn of the century, Gosse was used to conversing with Hardy regarding authorial intentions and textual details prior to publication.

In his biography of Edmund Gosse, Evan Charteris shows how Gosse made an artform of conversation – it was 'the spell by which he brought [friends] into the fold' (143). In a letter to Hardy in June 1883, Gosse reveals the important role of conversation within his conception of friendship: 'Would you delight me by coming up on Saturday...I shall be all alone in my house, and we could talk, lord! How we would Talk' (11 June 1883, punctuation as in original). When time and distance prevented conversation in person, correspondence became a crucial way to re-create this experience. By 1907 Gosse and Hardy were



meeting less frequently in person and this prompted Gosse to request a letter so that he would not get behind 'in the history of what you are thinking' (18 June 1907).

The establishment of the World Postal Union in 1874 meant that epistolary communication became more easily transnational. The poet John Addington Symonds wrote a letter to Hardy on 9 April 1889 from Switzerland and Hardy sent his reply five days later:

Dear Mr Symonds, I have often thought I should like to write a line to you – silently doing your good & enduring work in the romantic place in which you live – so that your letter is a greater pleasure to me than you imagine. Since receiving it I have spread out the map of Switzerland, the better to realize where you are, & it lies before me while I write. (CL 1: 191)

The use of the present tense in the second sentence collapses the temporal distance between the moment of writing and the moment of reading.

Visualisation of the map placed beside Hardy brings the two men into an imagined proximity through the process of 'elaborated interiority' (Roper 318) in which epistolary communication is removed from the existential present.

A marker of Hardy's friendship with Gosse was the frequency with which communication flowed back and forth between Max Gate and Gosse's primary London residences of Delamere and Hanover Terrace, creating an invisible line of connection between the two friends. In a letter to Gosse on 2 August 1886, Hardy was already imagining the journey of his missive during the act of penning it:

I direct this to Delamere Terrace, but imagine you have disappeared for a time from that pleasant corner of Town. (2 August 1886, *CL* 1: 15)

Hardy and Gosse also sent regular letters from the Savile Club in London. On 6 January 1889 Hardy posted a friendly note from the Club: 'Here am I at the Savile in a pillar of a cloud of fog' (6 January 1889, *CL* 1: 185). Hardy calls up a vivid visual representation of himself to counter the natural dislocation of correspondence and the embossed club letterhead would have also functioned as a marker of topography. Founded in 1868, the Savile Club played a key role in their friendship. Other members included Robert Louis Stevenson, Henry James, Rider Haggard and H. G. Wells. In Gosse's collection of essays, *Silhouettes* (1925), the Club is shown to be rooted in a commitment 'to advance conversation and friendship' between men from all professions (375). This was achieved not only within the physical space of the rooms but also by providing individuals with a fixed address in London from which to send and receive letters. Morton Cohen describes the Savile as:

one of the literary counting houses of London, where great works were inspired and sometimes executed, where hopeful writers sought out editors and publishers, where authors' rights and copyright reform became burning issues, where literary reputations were made as well as broken, and where, over pipes of tobacco and glasses of sherry, a handful of men casually, even haphazardly, helped steer the ship of English letters for a quarter of a century. [...] A number of collaborations were conceived and some were even brought to term at the Savile. A chance conversation sometimes gave birth to a major literary enterprise. (11)

As with epistolary networks, club interactions provided a sense of community for authors who might have otherwise operated in solitary environments.

However, Hardy was also wary of club membership, writing to Clodd that '[i]t is odd that nearly every adverse criticism is written by a fellow-Savilian (4

February 1892, *CL* 1: 257). In Hardy's experience, mutual understanding among Savilians was not guaranteed and moments of disjunction often surfaced in published criticism written by supposed friends and sympathetic colleagues. 'When one of the Club's book reviewers wrote an unfavourable notice of another member's latest novel, men put down their pipes and billiard cues, took up their pens, and waged internecine war' (Cohen 15).

In 1886 Gosse suffered heavy criticism when a review in the *Quarterly* exposed his scholarly text *From Shakespeare to Pope* (1885) as inaccurate and unreliable. Gosse had just been appointed as Clark Lecturer at Cambridge and the text, published by Cambridge University Press, was based on a series of lectures he had put together for an American tour. The *Quarterly* reviewer was identified as John Churton Collins – someone Gosse had once regarded as a friend but also as a professional rival. From this experience, Gosse discovered that friend and foe exist in one individual.

Gosse turned to the relative safety of epistolary disclosure to process and diffuse his public humiliation and private distress. Among others, he wrote to Hardy and disclosed periods of depression (Figure 8):

I have been scarcely fit for human society, I have been so deep in the dumps. I wonder whether climate has anything to do with it? It is the proper thing nowadays to attribute to physical causes all the phenomenon which people used to call spiritual. One may be dyspeptic and yet perfectly cheerful, and one may be quite well and yet no fit company for a church-yard worm. For the last week I should not have even tried to say unto the louse "thou art my sister". (28 August 1887)

he seemed to be taking  
along with him was the  
"Woodlanders". He spoke with  
warmth of you.

I hope your spirits  
have been pretty good this  
summer. I have been scarcely  
fit for human society, I  
have been so deep in the  
dumps. I wonder whether  
climate has anything to do  
with it? It is the proper  
thing nowadays to attribute

to physical causes all the  
phenomena which people  
used to call spiritual. But  
I am not sure. One may  
be dyspeptic and yet perfectly  
cheerful, and one may be  
quite well and yet no  
fit company for a church-  
yard wren. For the last  
week I should not have  
ventured to say unto the  
louse "thou art my sister."

Fig. 8. Letter from Gosse to Hardy (28 August 1887: 2-3).  
Dorset County Museum archive, H.2713.

This disclosure shows how Gosse had temporarily retreated from the public sphere but could still seek comfort within epistolary space. In his reply, Hardy fostered intimacy by offering mutual self-disclosure:

As to despondency I have known the very depths of it – you would be quite shocked if I were to tell you how many weeks & months in bygone years I have gone to bed wishing never to see the daylight again. (30 August 1887 *CL* 1: 173)

Hardy's support at this time of crisis shows the duality in their friendship in which each was responsible for acting as advisor to the other. In a letter dated 19 October 1886, Hardy admits that he 'accidentally opened the Quarterly at the Museum yesterday and there I saw the article you speak of. Do not, my dear Gosse, let it interfere with your digestion or your sleep for a single day' (*CL* 1: 154). Hardy moves on to share his own experiences in order to comfort his friend, creating empathic bonds which deepen their friendship: 'I have suffered at times from reviews – pecuniarily, & still more mentally' (*CL* 1: 154). Hardy draws attention to the aspect of personal betrayal played out in a public discourse:

The literary points in dispute between you & your assailant are quite ousted from the reader's mind by wondering conjectures as to what you have done in private life to offend him so! (*CL* 1: 154).

Upon reading Gosse's defence in the *Athenaeum* on 23 October 1886 Hardy wrote:

We were immensely amused at the collapse of your assailant's attack. You might have hit back much harder if you had chosen to do so; but perhaps you were wise to be moderate. (*CL* 1: 163)

This use of combative language was typical within the public and private discourse of literary criticism. The *Critic's* 'London Letter' referred to 'the

assailant and the assailed' and decided that 'the victory is to some extent with Mr Gosse' despite so 'determined...an attack' (qtd. Thwaite 280). The impact of Collins' review was significant: Gosse was exposed as inaccurate on fundamental points of literary history. But in their correspondence Hardy writes in a way that minimises Gosse's errors. Similarly, Henry James's letters to Gosse at this time expressed sympathy and sought to minimise the impact: 'cease to count your bruises [...] All that will remain of the fray a short time hence will be a general impression that you were ponderously and maliciously attacked by an old friend and that it came out' (n.d. qtd. Thwaite 288). And yet Ann Thwaite identifies how James was simultaneously writing to W. D. Howells, a mutual friend, to tell him that Gosse was indeed an inaccurate writer in a 'false position' (n.d. qtd. in Thwaite 288). Although solidarity was sought and found within personal correspondence – demonstrating the sense of reciprocal intimacy and support that the letter form conveyed – opinions might be quite inconsistent across wider correspondence networks and public forms of discourse.

Ralph Pite suggests that Hardy approached London literary friendships with a degree of impersonality and argues that these connections were 'rarely intimate' (*Thomas Hardy* 390). William Greenslade cites Pite in 'Thomas Hardy and Friendship' (2013) but writes that 'with women it was different' (28). However, applying this sort of a gender divide does not take into account the wide spectrum of friendly relations. I argue that where Gosse and Hardy found proximity, and a form of intimacy, was within the interplay between epistolary conversation and the reviews Gosse wrote to critique Hardy's work. While

mutually beneficial for both author and critic, their exchanges worked to close the gap between author and reviewer in a way that went beyond logrolling.<sup>18</sup>

## 2.4 Reviewing together

Eugene Williamson has explored what she regards as Hardy's 'hypersensitiveness to criticism' (348) but also makes the case for Hardy's impersonal objections to contemporary systems of review. Among his '[c]riticism of the critics' (Williamson, 348) Hardy listed anonymous reviewing, a propensity to focus on faults and minor inaccuracies, moral and conventional bias and discourtesy. Many of these objections were aired by Hardy in his personal correspondence with other literary friends, including Gosse. However, Williamson does not refer to the many reviews produced by Gosse or consider the influence of friendship on relations between an author and critic. Birgit Plietzsch, on the other hand, acknowledges that both Gosse and Edward Clodd went further to publicly defend Hardy than any other of his supporters (205). Other critical friends, including Horace Moule, John Hutton, Roden Noel and Charles Kegan Paul also wrote supportive reviews of his novels and poetry.

Plietzsch argues that 'Hardy was in a position to manipulate consciously [the reception of his fiction] through his being on friendly terms with influential publishers, editors and critics' (159). This goes some way to 'relativising' (211)

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<sup>18</sup> Used in a nineteenth-century literary context to mean the exchanging of favours and mutual praise by writers of each other's work.

the often held view that Hardy was a victim of the critics. Plietzsch draws on correspondence from the archive to build her argument. I extend this idea by considering issues of generic and hermeneutic slippage between the familiar letter and published review. Louise Curran (2016) draws attention to ‘the ambivalent status of the familiar letter, [as] a form of writing that blurred – in ways both productive and unsettling – distinctions between everyday writing’ and other forms (159). I argue that the epistolary dialogues between Gosse and Hardy can be viewed as a form of collaborative writing that shifts the genre boundaries of both the familiar letter and the literary review. By discussing Hardy’s intentions as author, and Gosse’s responses as reader, the pair were able to reach a form of partnership that reduced the distance between reviewee and reviewer.

At an early stage in their correspondence, Hardy voiced concerns to Gosse about the disparity between sentiments in private and public discourse.

Commenting on criticism he had received about *Two on the Tower* (1882),

Hardy wrote to Gosse:

I get the most extraordinary criticisms of T. on a T. Eminent critics write and tell me in private that it is the most original thing I have done ...while other eminent critics (I wonder if they are the same) print the most cutting rebukes you can conceive – show me (to my amazement) that I am quite an immoral person. (10 December 1882, CL 1: 110)

Prior to this, Hardy had sent a copy of his novel to Gosse ‘in the belief that you will perceive, if nobody else does, what I have aimed at – to make science, not the mere padding of a romance, but the actual vehicle of romance’ (4 December 1882, CL 1:110). In reader theory, ‘the abstract reader functions as an image of



the *ideal recipient* who understands the work in a way that optimally matches its structure and adopts the interpretive position and aesthetic standpoint put forward by the work' (Schmid n.pag., italics in original). In his letter Hardy is able to convey his intentions and prime Gosse, as reader, to be optimally receptive to his text. Through the space within familiar letters, Hardy could reduce the uncertainty about how a reader would react to his novel. Whereas Wolfgang Iser's 'implied reader' is a textual structure (34-5), the ideal reader becomes a real, rather than an imagined, other.<sup>19</sup>

In his letters Gosse often describes his physical and mental response to reading Hardy's work. For instance, when writing to Hardy about the short story 'A Tragedy of Two Ambitions' (1888), Gosse declares:

I read it with the most absorbed attention, and think it one of the most thrilling & most complete stories you have written. I walked under the moral burden of it for the whole remainder of the day. (1 January 1889)

In his memoir *Father and Son* Gosse revealed that 'fiction of any kind' was 'sternly excluded' in his devoutly Christian home and he was ten before he read his first novel; his father advised him to 'skip the pages which gave imaginary adventures and conversations' but he admits that these were 'the flower of the book to me' (21). Gosse attributed great stock to the power of fiction to give him both joy and 'fortitude to his individuality' (21). Therefore, his ability to share his emotional and mental responses in the role of reader would have been mutually beneficial to both sender and recipient. In 'The Profitable Reading of Fiction' (1888) Hardy refers to the desirability of a reader to fully immerse themselves in

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<sup>19</sup> There are no letters from Gosse from 1882 within the archive, so this part of their dialogue cannot be reconstructed.

the narrative, 'to not be too critical', to swallow the author 'whole, like any alternative pill' and experience the 'intensitive power of the reader's own imagination' (57). Through their epistolary conversations Gosse was able to present his readerly impressions of Hardy's work, which then came through in his criticism.

As his relationship with Gosse developed, Hardy's epistolary exchanges contributed to a shift in Gosse's reviewing practice, which was more in line with Hardy's views about useful, accurate criticism. Hardy was concerned by conventional biases of Victorian critical discourse. As Leslie Stephen once remarked, 'in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, a so-called critique is a second-hand repetition of what the critic takes for the orthodox review' (564, qtd. in Williamson 351). Hardy felt that critical discourse should guide and encourage the writer, but all too often he found that reviews were a space for sarcasm and personal attack. When he read a review that actually engaged with his artistic intentions, he often wrote a personal note of gratitude. For example, when Gosse referred to the 'subtly' of *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), in his essay on Thomas Lodge (1883), Hardy immediately wrote to him: 'The high honour of having one of my stories mentioned in this very essay will, if anything can, induce me to aim anew at good work in fiction – an aim which the system of magazine publishing sadly interferes with' (2 November 1883, *CL* 1: 120). From this point on, Hardy often presented Gosse with gift copies of his works.

When Hardy sent Gosse *The Woodlanders*, Gosse's reply revealed how closely he was following the reception of his friend's work in the newspapers: 'I was so

much disgusted with the way the critics treated “The Mayor” that I have gone in this time for a piece of log-rolling’ (22 March 1887) (Figure 9a-c). Gosse’s comments shed light on an intricate network of literary friendships which surfaced in the public sphere in the form of ‘log-rolling’ but Gosse’s support developed into a more sincere approach to critical evaluation through discussion with Hardy. Gosse’s remark about negative reviews of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* probably referred to a piece that appeared in the *Saturday Review* on 29 May 1886. This anonymous review declared that ‘*The Mayor of Casterbridge* is a disappointment’ (757, rpt. in Lerner and Holmstrom 49). The main focus of the critique related to the improbability of the story:

It is fiction stranger than truth; for, even at the comparatively distant date – some fifty years ago – and in the remote region – which we are unable to localize – when and where the scenes are laid, it is impossible to believe that the public sale by a husband of his wife and child to sailor, in a crowded booth at a village fair, could have attracted such slight attention from the many onlookers, that the newly-assorted couple should have been able to walk off and disappear so entirely within a few hours [...].

(757, rpt. in Lerner and Holmstrom 49)

29, DELAMERE TERRACE,  
WESTBOURNE SQUARE. W.

22. 3. 87

My dear Hardy

Very many Thanks for  
the gift of "The Woodlanders."

I was so much  
disgusted with the way the  
critics treated "The Mayor" that  
I have <sup>gone</sup>~~got~~ in this time  
for an amount piece of  
by-rolling. I have persuaded  
the "Saturday Review" to let  
me notice the "Woodlanders" &  
I have stirred up Coventry

Fig. 9a. Letter from Edmund Gosse to Hardy (22 March 1887: 1).  
Dorset County Museum archive, H.2712.

Patmore to make the same attempt with the St. James's Gazette. If he succeeds you will have, at all events, two conscientious reviewers. Last time it did not seem to me that you had one.

I have formed an idea that Little Shintock is more or less a study of Winter Parva. I daresay I

am quite 'wrong. I wonder if Buckbury-Fitzpiers is not a kind of hybrid between Okeford-Fitzpaine & Buckland-Newton? Of course Sherston Abbas is Sherborne? If one of these guesses is wrong, they all are, for they fit together like a puzzle. Your book is one

Fig. 9b. Letter from Edmund Gosse to Hardy (22 March 1887: 2-3).  
Dorset County Museum archive, H.2712.

H. 2712

of the most beautiful  
 that you have written. The  
 first volume starts off  
 rather stiffly, but the  
 second is superb, as  
 warm and rich as a  
 Titian. I have not  
 yet read the Third.

Ever sincerely yours

Edmund Gosse

How many of the details I have already  
 heard from your lips!

Fig. 9c. Letter from Edmund Gosse to Hardy (22 March 1887:4).  
 Dorset County Museum archive, H.2712.

Had the critic opened lines of communication with the author, he would have found that wife sales were actually commonplace in the early nineteenth century.<sup>20</sup> Hardy had recorded instances from newspapers in his literary notebooks and scrapbooks.

Setting himself apart from unreliable and inaccurate critics, Gosse chose to identify himself as one of ‘two conscientious reviewers’ who would be able to sensitively and accurately critique Hardy’s novel:

I have persuaded the “Saturday Review” to let me [review] the “Woodlanders” & I have stirred up Coventry Patmore to make the same attempt in the St. James’s Gazette. If he succeeds you will have, at all costs, two conscientious reviewers. Last time it did not seem to me that you had one. (22 March 1887)

Gosse employs a language of influential action – ‘log-rolling’, ‘persuaded’ and ‘stirred up’ – as an act of demonstrable support. Gosse’s piece subsequently appeared in the *Saturday Review* in April 1887 but much of its content was known to Hardy prior to publication. In their private discussion of *The Woodlanders* Gosse had made it clear that he felt ‘the first volume starts off rather stiffly, but the second is superb, as warm and rich as a Titan.’ Hardy replied, ‘I am so glad to get a letter from you in return for my miserable post-card: & still more that you like the story – though I dread your opinion of the last volume’ (31 March 1887, CL 1: 163). The published review echoes Gosse’s personal comments to Hardy, establishing trust between author and critic. In

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<sup>20</sup> For a full study of wife-selling in Britain, see Samuel Pyeatt Menefree’s *Wives for Sale*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1981. The earliest documented instances were in 1073 but there were still frequent reports in the early 1800s. Within the Hardy archive there is also a letter from a Dutch woman, writing of an instance of wife-selling in Holland in the 1920s. This letter, dated 26 December 1925, was sent to Hardy with a newspaper cutting of the incident as an enclosure.

print Gosse offers a fair critique in which he declares the early chapters are 'stiff and laboured' but the second volume is 'in our opinion, the best he has ever written' (484, rpt. in Cox 162). Reading this piece alongside his letter, public and private opinions are unified as Gosse had written to Hardy that '[y]our book is one of the most beautiful that you have written' (22 March 1887).

Notwithstanding his eagerness to defend and support Hardy in the press, Gosse's piece in the *Saturday Review* was unsigned. Was this a deliberate act to reinstate critical distance, perhaps? Assuming the generic identity of the *Saturday Review*, Gosse employs the plural pronoun 'we' and the writer is addressed formally as 'Mr Hardy'. While Gosse might have sought to separate friendship from professionalism, Hardy had made it clear that he disliked anonymous criticism, which he felt prevented genuine integrity and honesty in writing and conveyed a false impression of a shared consensus to the reading public.<sup>21</sup> Consoling Gosse about the unfavourable piece in the *Quarterly Review* the year before, Hardy had argued:

I do seriously think that the article is a strong argument against anonymous journalism. I have suffered terribly at times from reviews — pecuniarily, & still more mentally, & the crown of my bitterness has been my sense of unfairness in such impersonal means of attack, wh. conveys to an unthinking public the idea of an immense weight of opinion behind, to which you can only oppose your own little solitary personality: when the truth is that there is only another little solitary personality against yours all the time. (19 October 1886, *CL* 1: 154)

In the case of Gosse's *Woodlanders* review, though, there is evidence not of one 'solitary personality' but two minds working together. Gosse's

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<sup>21</sup> In 1968, Laurence Lerner and John Holmstrom produced a comprehensive collection of contemporary reviews of Hardy's novels: of the fifty-nine articles included, approximately half were anonymous. See *Thomas Hardy and his Readers*, London: Bodley Head, 1968.



correspondence with Hardy can be read as a rough draft of his review. Hardy is able to negotiate the interpretation of his work and Gosse is given an intimate space to test his critical remarks. Why then, did he not want to publish the piece under his name?

Private letter exchanges also allowed Gosse to demonstrate intimate knowledge of Hardy's Wessex in his published review. In his first letter about *The Woodlanders*, Gosse wondered whether 'Buckbury-Fitzpiers is not a kind of hybrid between Okeford-F & Buckland-Newton?' adding 'Of course Shelton Abbas is Sherborne' (22 March 1887). Hardy corrected him about some topographical details but agreed that 'the other places you have spotted with perfect accuracy' (31 March 1887, *CL* 1: 163). The opportunity to seek confirmation directly from the author then gave Gosse the confidence to speak as a Wessex authority in his review: 'It lies near the centre of the county of Dorset, not far from the hilly and orchard-covered confines of the beautiful Vale of Blackmore' (484, rpt. in Cox 162). Over two paragraphs Gosse describes the physical backdrop of the novel with careful precision, giving greater credibility to his critique.

Gosse represented the voice of a knowing and reliable reader. This was of mutual benefit as Hardy's work was understood and Gosse was able to rebuild his critical credentials after Collins's attack. His ability to bridge the gap between author intention and reader reception was enhanced because he was privy to information about the novel during its planning and construction. He reminds Hardy of this in the March letter when he exclaims 'How many details have I

already heard from your lips!' (22 March 1887), conveying his pleasure in the privileged position afforded by their friendship. Gosse was also a regular reviewer of Henry James's works but Pooler notes that in their correspondence James did not impart information about his writing prior to publication. This disparity suggests Hardy and Gosse experienced moments of greater intimacy than was necessarily common within overlapping literary circles.

The emerging partnership was secured by a literary gift bestowed by Hardy, who embedded two lines of Gosse's poetry in *The Woodlanders*. This worked as a hidden reward for his earnest reader. Hardy chose to use the last two stanzas from Gosse's 1885 poem 'Two Points of View'<sup>22</sup> as a way of commenting on the moment when Grace Melbury, newly married, sees Giles Winterborne again (in Volume Two, Chapter IX):

If I forget,  
 The salt creek may forget the ocean;  
 If I forget,  
 The heart whence flows my heart's bright motion,  
 May I sink meanlier than the worst,  
 Abandoned, outcast, crushed, accurst,  
 If I forget!

Though you forget,  
 No word of mine shall mar your pleasure;

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<sup>22</sup> Gosse's poem was originally published in *Firdatui in Exile and Other Poems* (1885).

Though you forget,  
 You filled my barren life with treasure,  
 You may withdraw the gift you gave,  
 You still are queen, I still am slave,  
 Though you forget.

(Gosse 15-28 qtd. in Hardy, *The Woodlanders* 178)

As a subtle nod to their friendship, it personally invested Gosse in the narrative, and provided a new, and more popular, platform for Gosse's poetic voice. Hardy admitted that he changed 'lord' to 'queen' in the penultimate line for the purposes of the narrative. This act of intertextuality and overlap represented an affinity between the two writers. Both Hardy and Gosse had harboured a desire to be known as poets at different points in their lives.

When Hardy was able to set fiction aside and re-focus on poetry, it irked him that many reviewers refused to recognise him as anything other than a novelist, whereas Gosse provided a platform for critical discussion of Hardy's poetry which was picked up by the younger writers of the twentieth century.<sup>23</sup> In *Father and Son* (1907), Gosse marked the discovery of verse in his youth as a 'miracle' that caused his 'inner being' to 'ring out with sound' (169). While Rosemarie Morgan argues that Gosse's found Hardy's poetry 'too pessimistic' (185), this is not borne out in their personal correspondence. In November 1901 Gosse wrote to tell Hardy that he had been reading 'your new Poems' and disclosed how '[a]s I read, my eyes grow clouded with the waters of self-pity. That is really how

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<sup>23</sup> I explore the responses of younger writers to Hardy's poetry in chapter three.

lyrical poetry affects one, isn't it?' (23 November 1901, qtd. in Charteris 281).

Having established a critical dialogue in their personal correspondence, Gosse, writing of his response to Hardy's poetry, feels conscious of the need to blur the genres of the personal letter and published review:

This is a wretched letter, but I cannot help it. I should make a fool of myself if I told you – told you again! – what your work is to me, how I turn back and back, how helplessly uncritical about it I have become by sheer intensity of my sympathy. (23 November 1901, rpt. in Charteris 282)

Similarly, on reading Hardy's poem 'A Tramp-Woman's Tragedy' (1903), Gosse declares 'I have been stirred up to the depths of my heart by your ballad [...] I have read it over and over again, until I am completely subjugated by the spell of it' (13 November 1903).

Gosse was particularly complimentary in his discussion of *The Dynasts*, in which he praised the work for its originality, finding pleasure in Hardy's 'fresh experiment in poetic form': '[It is] a solid, grave, original contribution to our serious imaginative literature. Lord, what a genius you are, in these impoverished days!' (21 January 1904). Given the propensity for published posthumous letter collections during the nineteenth century, Gosse may well have written these later letters with an awareness that his personal comments might resurface in the public domain at some point. His letters commenting on *The Dynasts* read more as unpublished reviews than any of his early epistolary texts:

I thought to myself there could hardly be a better test of the genuine...appreciation of literature, than to put a reader down to 'The Dynasts' and see what he thinks of it. I hold myself that it will be, that it is becoming, the most important piece of creative art that the young 20<sup>th</sup> century has yet seen. (26 February 1906, ellipsis in original)

On receiving the third volume of *The Dynasts*, Gosse conveyed an image of himself within a literary Garden of Eden, ‘hold[ing] each of these fruits of Paradise in the fingers of a hand, and nibbl[ing] here and nibbl[ing] there’ (12 February 1908). While such paradisiacal language is a feature of Gosse’s correspondence, he may also be playing to a wider audience, perceiving that his letters to a canonical author might one day become published as literary texts.

Gosse’s review of Hardy’s final novel, *The Well-Beloved* (1897), was published a week after Gosse had written to Hardy to tell him: ‘I am all glowing from “The Well Belov’d”; It is one of the most beautiful things you have ever done, palpitating with beauty [...] I am going to review you, and I shall let myself go’(16 March 1897). The unsigned review appeared in the *Saturday Review* on 20 March 1897 (Figure 10). Although this did not allow much time for discussion or negotiation, the language between Gosse’s personal letter and published review closely mirrored each other. Gosse opens his review by focusing on the artistic value of the work: ‘it is permeated with the instinctive passion of beauty’ (296). Similarly, in his letter Gosse writes, “‘The Tragedy of Nympholet” – that is what your book is’ and in his anonymous review he mused that ‘The Tragicomedy of a Nympholet’ would make an apt renaming of the novel. When reading the letter and review together, the genre boundaries become almost transparent:

My dear Hardy

I am all glowing from “The Well-Belov’d”. It is one of the most beautiful things you have ever done, palpitating with beauty. I cannot reserve my

saying so to a decent interval – I must say so at once, shaking your hand thus with affectionate admiration. But I am going to review you, and I shall let myself go. “The Tragedy of a Nympholept” – that is what your book is. And so delicate, and sculptural, and uplifted.

(16 March 1897)

## REVIEWS.

## MR. HARDY'S NEW NOVEL.

"The Well-Beloved." By Thomas Hardy. London : Osgood, McIlvaine & Co. 1897.

THE only valid objection which has been brought against Mr. Hardy's late books is that they have, sometimes even obtrusively, lacked beauty. Large portions of "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" and almost all the late chapters of "Jude the Obscure" were in their essence ugly. The landscape, the sentiments, the characters were delineated with force and penetration, but they were of set purpose squalid. Now, we have always contended that Mr. Hardy, by the natural bent of his genius, is called to describe not sordid things, but what is noble and gracious, and we therefore record at once, as an element of importance in considering "The Well-Beloved," that it is permeated with the instinctive passion of beauty. No book which Mr. Hardy has ever written is more intimately concerned with personal and local and sentimental comeliness; the action of exquisite form and colour on a nature of hypersensitive perception is the central theme of the story, and however fantastic and however remote the action may be judged, there can be no question of its preoccupation with beauty. Mr. Hardy, therefore, has come back to his own province of the imagination.

In a mysterious passage, which has returned to our memory in reading "The Well-Beloved," De Quincey tells us how "those who in Pagan days caught in forests a momentary glimpse of the nymphs and sylvan goddesses were struck with a hopeless passion; they were nympholepts." If we had the task of re-naming Mr. Hardy's new novel, we should be inclined to call it the Tragicomedy of a Nympholept. The hero is one who, born on a Wessex peninsula among the ruins of a temple of Venus, has become subject almost from infancy to a fugitive ecstasy which transports him with rapturous desire, and then incontinently fades away, so that he is doomed to be forever pursuing, through the attractions of a multitude of women, a sort of ignis fatuus of love. It is to him as though the uniquely desirable quality is a light, which successively blazes from behind the eyes of woman after woman, but always retires and fades before he can satiate himself with it, only to beam forth in renewed splendour from some other place. So that, with no intentional disloyalty or pleasure in change for change's sake, he is incessantly loving and riding away, like a false knight in a Border ballad, only with this difference: that he quits the field before he has conquered and not after. It is, obviously, very difficult to present such a character as this—which in its very essence borders upon the fatuous—without challenging ridicule. So skilful is Mr. Hardy that we follow Jocelyn Pierston through a career of ineffectuality without once being tempted to laugh at him.

The course of the story runs in that curious fragment of the Dorsetshire coast which Mr. Hardy chooses to call the Isle of Slingers, but which is known to the world as the Isle of Portland. To the public at large this picturesque peninsula is familiar for its quarries and their product, and for its convict prison. The latter makes no appearance in Mr. Hardy's book; as a matter of fact, you may live on Portland and scarcely know that such a place exists. But the sculpturable white stone, that is at the very heart of the tale; and the author, by those swift transitions of his which are one of the charms of his style, is for ever reminding us of its plastic properties and its effect upon the autochthonous dwellers upon its surface. The sea beats upon a half-deserted "wharf from which St. Paul's Cathedral had sailed"; in the London Docks the hero recovers his native mood, and is an Islander again, by merely wandering among the blocks of fair white stone. This racial instinct, this similarity among those who come from the Home of the Slingers, is what differentiates true Islanders, however widely they have strayed in other lands, from the rest of the world; and this it is which unites Jocelyn Pierston, through three distant episodes, more firmly to the successive Avices than to any of their rivals.

Mr. Hardy has never written anything finer than the pages in "The Well-Beloved" in which he describes the magic asserted by the wind-swept waters of the great Deadman's Bay over the temperaments of the Islanders. The passage in which Pierston and Avice the First stand under the lighthouse at night and listen to the sound of the vast concave beneath them is worthy of comparison with the famous night-piece on Egdon Heath in "The Return of the Native" or with the description of the apple-orchards in "The Woodlanders." Here is a fragment of it:—

"At periods of a quarter of a minute there arose a deep hollow stroke like the single beat of a drum, the intervals being filled with a long-drawn rattling as of bones between huge canine jaws."

No one who has heard the rising and falling of the sea on a dyke of pebbles but will respond to the bold fidelity of this description. And this is better still:—

"The evening and night winds here were . . . charged with a something that did not burden them elsewhere. They brought it up from that sinister Bay to the west whose movement Jocelyn and Avice were hearing now. It was a presence—an imaginary shape or essence from the human multitude lying below: those who had gone down in vessels of war, East Indianmen, barges, brigs, and ships of the Armada—select people, common and debased, whose interests and hopes had been as wide asunder as the poles, but who had rolled each other to oneness on that restless sea-bed. There could almost be felt the brush of their huge composite ghost as it ran, a shapeless figure, over the isle, shrieking for some good god who would disunite it again."

It was in this atmosphere of mysterious sea-music that Jocelyn Pierston was born about forty-five years ago. His father was a well-to-do stone merchant of the Island, a dull man, but shrewd, and ready to let his only son develop his really remarkable talent for sculpture. So Jocelyn goes up to town, and becomes a successful student, and rubs off something of the Islander. But with his gentleness and his genius and his tender appreciation of beauty there has grown up within him that nympholepsy of which we have spoken, that inability to delight in anything save in a charm that flashes and then fades away, leaving him without power to do anything but follow the ecstasy as it migrates to some other human form. We understand Mr. Hardy to describe this as a symptom of neurasthenia, as an isle-bred fancy which becomes more and more dominant over the will of the sculptor. So, when he goes back to the white quarries and the moaning of Deadman's Bay, he light-heartedly determines to marry the Island-beauty, Avice Caro, after one of Mr. Hardy's familiar prompt betrothals. But Avice fails, from modesty, to keep a certain tryst, and the charm instantly and finally quits her form to take up an equally precarious station in that of Miss Marcia Bencomb. The hopelessly polygamous enthusiast, however, soon finds that the light has faded out of Marcia also, and the fantastic pursuit of the Ideal has to begin again.

It lingers only in the Island faces, and the solitary hope of happiness for Jocelyn Pierston is to come back to the peninsula, and, as they say there, to "live in the same wold way in the same wold house." There he puts the world aside. He has in process of time become a Royal Academician of high repute, a celebrated and a wealthy man. But he wearies of it all, and feels that there is no happiness for his sophisticated nature save in throwing off the trappings of life, and resigning himself to the simple bareness of beauty and sex, devoid of wit, or artifice, or talent. In Avice the Second he believes that at the age of forty he has at length found the physical shrine in which his fancy can arrest the volatile charm; but Avice the Second is as fugitive a soul as he is himself, and just when he thinks that he holds her a strange obstacle arises. A third time, at the age of sixty, in circumstances of a very curious kind, contrived with consummate delicacy of skill by the author, another opportunity occurs for him to fix the vision, and again, finally this time, the divine prospect of the Well-Beloved evades his grasp. It would not be fair to do more than indicate thus vaguely the ingenious plot of Mr. Hardy's sketch of the adventures of a temperament.

Fig. 10. 'Mr Hardy's New Novel'. *Saturday Review*, 20 March 1897: 296.

Again adopting the role of authoritative Wessex decoder, Gosse informed the reader that Hardy's Isle of Slingers was really Portland. In his letter, Gosse drew on the intimacy of their friendship by recalling a visit they had made to the island. He used Hardy's Wessex topography as a shared frame of reference: 'At every pace comes back to me that orange-tawny autumn afternoon when you took me up into the Isle of the S[lingers]' (16 March 1897). Gosse displays an interest in the setting to fulfil a staple review function but the shared memory evoked allows the privileged aspects of intimate friendship to filter through into the review.

In a crossover of physical and critical distance, Hardy read Gosse's review in the intimate personal space of his bedroom: 'The review came as a ray of sunshine upon my bed' (21 March 1897, *CL* 2: 153). Given his cynicism regarding the critical discourse of the day, Hardy sets Gosse apart by recognising in him a 'penetrative valuation' (21 March 1897, *CL* 2: 153).

## **2.5 The 'grimy features' of *Jude the Obscure***

Hardy believed standards should be in place to protect against: 'critical malice, concealed ideological bias, unwarranted biographical influence, ignorance, [and] insensitivity' (Williamson 349). When *Jude the Obscure* came out in 1895, Hardy fell victim to all of the above. In particular, a number of critics objected on moral grounds to what they saw as an inappropriate challenge to marriage laws.



Hardy's publisher Arthur Stirling wrote to him to express concern about the more damaging reviews that emerged, most notably one in the *Pall Mall Gazette* which renamed it 'Jude the Obscene'. Stirling suggested that 'if some friend of yours could write an inspired review in an influential paper it might act as a most useful counterblast' (15 November 1895). Gosse was surely that friend.

By this point Gosse had already written one review of *Jude* – which appeared in the *St James's Gazette* on 8 November 1895 – but Stirling's advice to Hardy perhaps resulted in Gosse then writing a second review a few months later. Although a little muted in its praise, the review in the *Gazette* was nonetheless what Hardy would have regarded as a fair review, one that judged his novel primarily on methodological and aesthetic qualities:

[...] a great solidity of workmanship, marvellous exactitude and coherency of observation, claim our respect and our attention. "Jude the Obscure" is not so brilliant a book as "Tess of the d'Urbervilles" but it is more regularly constructed and more convincing. (Gosse, 'Mr Hardy's' 4)

Gosse seems eager to establish parameters for criticism in this text. In his previous epistolary discourse with Gosse, Hardy had called for 'a time [...] when a scientific system of reviewing will be adopted, & books no longer condemned in their entirety for some such reason as that the critic finds a slip in an accent, quotation, or date' (*CL* 1: 159). In Gosse's first review, he focused on structural and aesthetic qualities by which to measure the author's achievement. In this regard, he is clearly in line with Hardy's views. At the close of the review, Gosse reiterated his approach, becoming a spokesperson for Hardy:

We have confined ourselves to the external aspects of this remarkable book. Those who enjoy the discussion of social theories and attacks on social law have a novel that is made for their hands. We expect to be pestered by a “Jude and Sue society”. But the preface expressly deprecates any desire to preach a sermon or propound a dogma and we choose to consider the book merely as the very remarkable work of almost the greatest living novelists. (Gosse, ‘Mr Hardy’s’ 4)

In drawing the reader’s attention to the preface of the novel, Gosse is able to direct critical audiences to Hardy’s own explanation of his work. Presenting a united front between author and critic, this is a form of collaborative writing in which dialogue extends across literary work, preface, correspondence and review.

Writing to Gosse on 10 November 1895 Hardy declared ‘[y]our review is the most discriminating that has yet appeared. It required an artist to see that the plot is almost geometrically constructed [...]’ (CL 2: 93). In choosing to refer to Gosse as an ‘artist’, Hardy complimented his friend on his powers of perception. However, Hardy’s evaluative comment that the review was the ‘most discriminating yet’ is perhaps a little conservative. To some degree, Hardy felt that his intended message had failed to be received by Gosse as reader. In a postscript to this letter, he answers Gosse’s review in order to address some of the negative aspects. Gosse deemed *Jude* ‘a very gloomy, [...] even a grimy, story’ (CL 2: 93). Through their private discourse, Hardy explained that:

[t]he “grimy” features of the story go to show the contrast between the ideal life a man wished to lead, & the squalid real life he was fated to lead. [...] But I must have lamentably failed, as I feel I have, if this requires explanation & is not self-evident. (10 November 1895, CL 2: 93)

Hardy takes responsibility for a failed message but he also describes the intended reader of *Jude* in a way that suggests Gosse, as reader, had work to do in order to understand the novel: 'As for the story itself, it is really sent out to those into whose souls the iron has entered, & has entered deeply, at some time of their lives. But one cannot choose one's readers' (10 November 1895, *CL* 2: 93). In a follow-up letter, on 20 November 1895, he laments, 'what a miserable accomplishment it is, when I compare it with what I meant to make it!' (*CL* 2: 99).

After Hardy's epistolary explanations, Gosse wrote a second review, which appeared in *Cosmopolis* in January 1896. The letters sent between Gosse and Hardy prior to his second review demonstrate how author and reader attempt to bridge the gap together. As Plietzsch has noted (205), Hardy's explanation of the novel's grimy features being used 'to show the contrast between the ideal life a man wished to lead, & the squalid real life he was fated to lead' re-surfaces almost identically in Gosse's review (*CL* 2: 93):

We have, first of all, the contrast between the ideal life the young peasant of scholarly instincts wished to lead, and the squalid real life into which he was fated to sink. (Gosse, *Cosmopolis* 61)

Stirling had written that 'reviewers generally are not in possession of the ideas that you had in mind when writing the book' (15 November 1895) but through the epistolary medium Hardy's intentions find both audience and voice with a public platform. By embedding Hardy's words into Gosse's review the two

friends write together. Through Gosse, Hardy was able to influence the criticism and interpretation of his work (Plietzsch 205).<sup>24</sup>

In the second letter, dated 20 November 1895, Hardy had complained that he had been unfairly compared to Zola with regard to the 'course scenes with Arabella' [...]; the newspaper critic might [...] have sneered at them for their Fielding-ism rather than for their Zolaism. But your everyday critic knows nothing of Fielding' (CL 2: 99). In keeping with the views Hardy expressed here on the reception of the work, and keen to present himself as the discerning critic, Gosse brought in a comparison to Fielding in his *Cosmopolis* review: 'here is Mr. Hardy ready to say any moral thing that Fielding said, and a good deal more too' (65).

In correspondence with both Gosse and Clodd, Hardy also discussed his frustration that *Jude* was being grouped together with a number of contemporary novels about the marriage question:

It is curious that some of the papers should look upon the novel as a manifesto on "the marriage question" (although of course, it involves it) – [...] The only remarks which can be said to bear on the *general* marriage question occur in dialogue, & comprise no more than half a dozen pages in a book of five hundred. And of these remarks I state (p.362) that my own views are not expressed therein. I suppose the attitude of these critics is to be accounted for by the accident that, during the serial publication of my story, a sheaf of "purpose" novels on the matter appeared. (Hardy to Gosse 10 November, 1895 CL 2: 93)

Owing, I suppose, to the accident of its appearance just after the sheaf of purpose-novels we have had lately on the marriage question, — though

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24 For a discussion of how Hardy may have influenced the critical material published by other reviewers, see Birgit Plietzsch's *The Novels of Thomas Hardy as a Product of Nineteenth Century Social, Economic, and Cultural Change*. Berlin: Tenea, 2004.

written long before them — some of the papers class mine with them — though the case of my people is one of temperamental unfitness for the contract, peculiar to the family of the parties.

(Hardy to Clodd 10 November 1895, *CL* 2: 92-93)

In Gosse's review we see Hardy's ideas, and even language, entering public debate:

Mr. Hardy is certainly to be condoled with upon the fact that his novel, which has been seven years in the making, has appeared at last at a moment when a sheaf of 'purpose' stories on the 'marriage question' (as it is called) have just been irritating the nerves of the British Patron. No serious critic, however, will accuse Mr. Hardy of joining the ranks of these deciduous troubles of our peace. (*Cosmopolis* 61)

While Hardy was not campaigning through the narrative of his novel, Gosse's comment that the purpose novels were 'deciduous troubles of our peace' may have been a point of disagreement between author and reader. Hardy's ideal recipient was a changing entity over the course of his fictional output and, as Wright suggests, he 'increasingly risked challenging and antagonising [his readers]' in order to encourage reflection of outdated views' (1). In particular, Gosse reveals a lack of real insight into Hardy's construction of the character of Sue. After his first review, Hardy had praised Gosse for realising that 'you are quite right: there is nothing perverted or depraved in Sue's nature' (20 November 1895, *CL* 2: 99). However, in the *Cosmopolis* review Gosse seems far more critical of this character: 'She is a poor, maimed "degenerate", ignorant of herself and of the perversion of her instincts' (66). Jane Thomas refers to this as a 'tantalisingly obscure and largely unsympathetic pathological analysis of Sue' (10). In using the noun 'perversion' Gosse seems to deliberately go against Hardy's private explanation of her nature. Why did Gosse decide to

depart from their usual informal practices of letter-to-review expression? In his public criticism of the character, Gosse must have known that he would risk damaging his friendship with Hardy. On receiving Gosse's second review, Hardy praised the wit that came through in his writing but avoided discussion of the content 'of which I will talk to you when we meet.' However, he makes a clear point of defence:

The only point in the novel on which I feel sure is that it makes for morality; & that delicacy or indelicacy in a writer is according to his object. If I say to a lady "I met a naked woman", it is indelicate. But if I go on to say "I found she was mad with sorrow", it ceases to be indelicate. And in writing *Jude* my mind was fixed on the ending. (CL 2: 152)

Despite some positive dialogue, *Jude* marked a point of divergence between the two friends which increased when the revised edition of the novel was printed in 1912. Gosse's first review was based on a bowdlerised version of *Jude*, published in 1895 by Osgood, McIlvaine & Co. Wright claims that Gosse finally voiced his real thoughts and made Hardy 'really angry' when he 'said to my face at the lunch-table at the Savile that *Jude* was the most indecent novel ever written' (CL 4: 33, qtd. in Wright 197). By contrast, Greg Buzzwell points to H.G. Wells as being 'at the vanguard of a new generation of intellectuals' (n.pag.) as a reader who could appreciate Hardy's intentions. In his unsigned critique for the *Saturday Review*, H.G. Wells declared: 'There is no other novelist alive with the breadth of sympathy, the knowledge or the power for the creation of *Jude*' (*Saturday Review*, 81. 8 February 1896).

## 2.6 Who was Hardy's Reader?

Hardy required readers to bridge the gap between his intentions and the text's realised form; As he stated in the preface to *Tess*, the reader needed to repair his 'defects of narration by their own imaginative intuition' (Hardy viii). In many ways, Gosse fulfilled this reader role.

However, with regard to *Jude* and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, an analysis of the Gosse-Hardy correspondence reveals elements of dissonance in the reader-author friendship. Despite how profusely Gosse championed Hardy's work, in private correspondence with others in the literary network Gosse had shifting loyalties. In August 1893 Gosse had written to Robert Louis Stevenson: 'Tom Hardy has been sharing one of these sad feasts with me to-day – the presence of a guest being a momentary relief to my afflicted guardian. His ideas about fiction are curiously interesting, but I am on your side, not his' (19 August 1893, rpt. in Chateris 230). His comments refer to Stevenson's negative response to *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. While Stevenson had enjoyed *The Woodlanders* and written to Hardy to commend him on *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, he was repelled by *Tess*. Henry James had written to Stevenson, '[b]ut oh yes, dear Louis, she is vile. The pretence of "sexuality" is only equalled by the absence of it' (19 March 1892, rpt. in Lerner and Holmstrom 85).

After James's death in 1916, his letters were published as an edited collection, *Letters of Henry James* (1920), which Hardy duly read. Here he discovered

what Stevenson and James had said within the privacy of their own epistolary dialogue; it became a noteworthy entry in *Life and Work*:

Hardy's good-natured friends Henry James and R. L. Stevenson (whom he afterwards called the Polonius and Osric of novelists) corresponded about it in this vein: "Oh yes, dear Louis: 'Tess of the d'Urbervilles' is vile. The pretence of sexuality is only equalled by the absence of it, [?] and the abomination of the language by the author's reputation for style." (*Letters of Henry James*.) When Hardy read this after James's death he said, "How indecent of those two virtuous females to expose their mental nakedness in such a manner." (259-260)

It is not known whether Hardy discovered Gosse's letter to Stevenson, though.

After the first wave of *Tess* reviews in 1891, Hardy's correspondence with not only Gosse, but also Edward Clodd and Roden Noel provided him with a private outlet to vent his frustrations:

Have you any idea of the writer of the review of *Tess* in the Saturday? I ask because what he has done has never before come within my experience... By a rearrangement of words in my preface he makes me say something quite different from what I do say [...]. Also an assertion in the book to the effect that the heroine looked more developed & marriageable than she was, is made to mean something indecent which I never thought of. (Hardy to Gosse, 18 January 1892, *CL* 1: 271)

This review was the fifth to appear in the press, on 16 January 1892.<sup>25</sup> The anonymous reviewer questioned the propriety of Hardy's description of *Tess*:

[T]he story gains nothing by the reader being let into the secret of the physical attributes which especially fascinated him in *Tess*. Most people can fill in the blanks for themselves, without it being necessary to put the dots on the i's so very plainly; but Mr. Hardy leaves little unsaid. [...] It is these side suggestions that render Mr. Hardy's story so disagreeable, and *Tess* is full of them. (*Saturday Review* 73, rpt. in Lerner and Holmstrom 66)

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<sup>25</sup> These three reviews of *Tess* can be found in Lerner and Holmstrom's collection *Thomas Hardy's Readers* (1968).



By February, a review by Andrew Lang, another close friend of both Gosse and Clodd, was published in the *New Review*. Hardy found this to be a more personal attack given his remarks to Clodd:

Lang's<sup>26</sup> article on "Tess" in the *New Review* is, of course, Langy. If Andrew, with his knowledge & opportunities, had a heart instead of a hollow place where his heart ought to be, he would by this time have been among the immortals of letters instead of in the sorry position of gnawing his quill over my poor production. (Hardy to Clodd, 4 February 1892, *CL* 1: 262) (Figure 11)

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<sup>26</sup> Lang, Andrew. Untitled review in the *New Review*. February 1892, vi:247-9. Although the archive contains correspondence from Andrew Lang in which he asserts authorship, this review was later revealed to have been written by his wife, Leonora.

from  
The Temple

MAX GATE,

DORCHESTER,

Feb. 4th. 1892.

My dear Clodd,

Lang's article on "Tess" in the new Review is, of course, Langy. If Andrew with his knowledge of opportunities had a heart instead of a hollow place where his heart ought to be, he would have by this time been among the immortals of letters instead of in the sorry position of gnawing his quill over my poor productions. Or, if accident forced him to this, business, he would have felt the smallness of stooping to pick out the trivial accidents of a first edition of a book of 140,000 words and have put his finger on the real and serious faults of the story, which not one of these gentry has had the wit to find out.

The only clear objection he makes of the novel is its tragedy, and everything he says against it in this respect tells with equal force against all the Greek dramatists, Shakespeare, the Elizabethans, while his christian (?) objection (I suppose it is meant to be christian) to the words "President of the Immortals" etc., is evidently factitious for I distinctly state that his words are paraphrased from Aeschylus.

You will be glad to know that there is no check to the sale of the book, Mudie keeps ordering more and more, and others pari passu.

It is odd that nearly every *advers* criticism is written by a fellow Savilian.

Yours sincerely,  
Thomas Hardy.

P.S. The supposed error in the baptisimal rite is not really an error.\* It happened, for one thing; moreover the refusal to bury is described as being the result of personal feeling of the Parson owing to his exclusion from the house.

T.H.

Fig. 11. TS copy of a letter from Hardy to Edward Clodd (4 February 1892: 1). Dorset County Museum archive, H.1760.

It appears that Clodd acted as middle man and communicated Hardy's complaints to Lang; the latter then wrote a direct letter to Hardy, offering a somewhat reserved apology for their differing views: 'I did not mean to be unfair, my tastes are somewhat antiquated' (2 May 1892) (Figure 12):

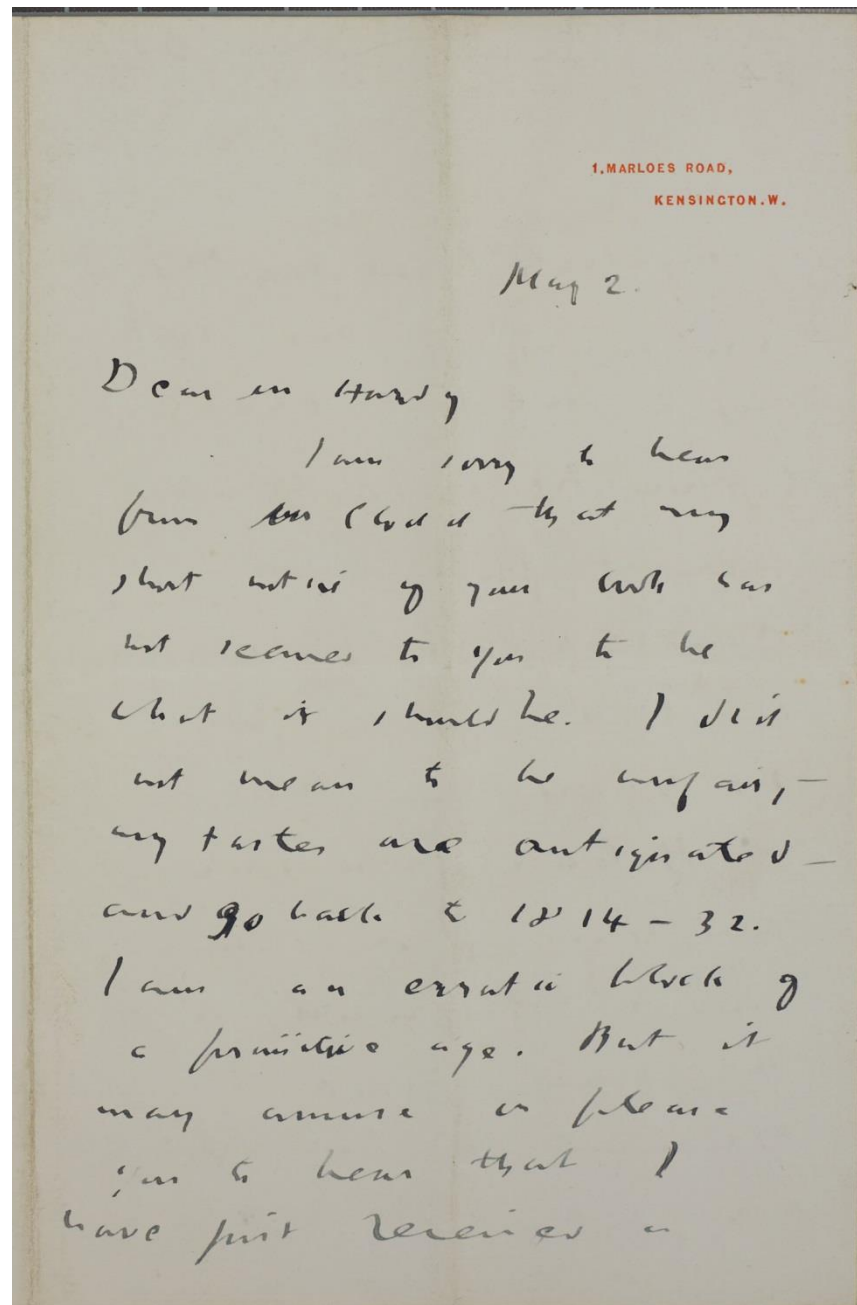


Fig. 12. Letter from Andrew Lang to Hardy (2 May 1892: 1)  
Dorset County Museum archive. (H.3855)

By the time an eleventh review of Hardy's novel appeared that March, in the *Quarterly Review*, Hardy had become used to the criticisms levelled against his work and, in a letter to Roden Noel, he approaches the matter in a more jocular manner:

Have you seen the attack on "Tess" in the *Quarterly*? It is amusing & smart, entirely at the expense of truth — however. It is just what the Q. might have been expected to say. (Hardy to Noel, 6 March 1892, CL 1: 265)

Noel had written his own review of *Tess* but found it hard to publish, which he wrote to Hardy about. This opened up new lines of connection between the two writers, whereas with Gosse the collaborative relationship became more fractured. While Gosse supported and consoled Hardy in their letter discussions about *Tess*, his approach revealed conservative views in relation to women which Hardy could not agree with:

I am very glad that you have written to me. The review of Tess in the S.R. was a positive scandal. I expressed a wish to write about the book, and reminded Walter Pollock that I had done so in the case of *The Woodlanders*. But no reply. I vaguely think some one of the horrid women that live about the Albany is guilty of this deed. There are certain traces I think I recognise of a female hand that has done this sort of thing before.

Your letter helps me to see what I cannot see when one of these vultures swoops down on myself and tears my liver, but what in your case I can plainly see. A review like this, in which the bad faith is manifest, and the want of literary gumption not less manifest, and in which the opinion is diametrically opposed to that otherwise generally expressed, is *of no importance whatsoever*. I go further, and say that it is a positive boon. If you are praised everywhere, with a nauseous uniformity of compliment, even those who naturally like your work get impatient. A review like this in the S.R. puts them back upon their mettle.

My dear Child, listen now to me!

In *Tess of the D's* you have achieved the biggest success you have made since *The Return of the Native*. Your book is simply magnificent. [...] You have strengthened your position tremendously, among your own

confrere and the serious male public. Let them rave. Your affectionate Friend, Edmund Gosse'

(19 January 1892, rpt. in Charteris 225-226, emphasis in original)

Recalling his own suffering at the hands of Churton Collins, Gosse is able to gain perspective and 'see what [he] cannot see' when the self is involved directly. For Sandra Lynch, this is an essential aspect of friendship: similar experiences are mirrored in the lives of friends, creating an external counterpart through which to view the self. Nevertheless, Gosse's homocentric remarks about 'the serious male public' and 'the horrid women who live about the Albany' actually disrupt the bond between author and critic. By this point in his career as a novelist, Hardy was able to take in the whole sweep of opinions, voiced not only in the press but also within individual letters that came through his letter box, and he countered Gosse's assumptions about gendered readings of literary reception:

I hardly think the writer can be a woman – the sex having caught on with enthusiasm, as I gather from numerous communications from mothers (who tell me they are putting "Tess" into their daughters' hands to safeguard their future (!) (CL1: 288)<sup>27</sup>

Terry Wright explores how Gosse may have influenced Hardy into thinking that the male-female disparity in his readership was greater than it was (37). This perspective was certainly one that Gosse perpetuated in his public essays about Hardy and in their personal correspondence. In 1890, just one year before the publication of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Gosse wrote a piece for *The Speaker* in which he confidently asserted that Hardy, like George Meredith, 'enlists the bulk of his readers from the class of adult male persons' (295).

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<sup>27</sup> In chapter four I explore some of the letters Hardy received from readers after the publication of *Tess*.

However, Hardy's implied reader was both male and female. In the preface to the fifth edition of *Tess*, Hardy purposefully writes:

For this responsiveness I cannot refrain from expressing my thanks; and my regret is that, in a world where one so often hungers in vain for friendship, where even not to be wilfully misunderstood is felt as kindness, I shall never meet in person these appreciative readers, male and female, and shake them by the hand. (vii)

With regard to the critical reception of *The Well-Beloved* in 1897, Gosse reiterated his dismissive views of female critics (Figure 13a-c):

Sheer unjust detraction does lower one's vitality for the moment; it is an actual poison. My impression is that that review was written by some smart feather-headed woman, grinding some axe of her own. If one only knew who wrote these things, very often the whole sting of them would fade away. For instance, the review of "Tess" which annoyed us all so much, as soon as one found out that M's Andrew Lang had written it, – what did it matter? I dread more than any other "sign of the times" the prominence which women are getting in journalism, because women are always ignorant, generally malevolent, and entirely unscrupulous. That responsibility to keep high the standard of the Best, for its own sake, which is the very spirit & blood of an artist-man, seems to be incomprehensible to a woman. (1 April 1897)

Gosse's prejudice towards women operating in the critical field might have been part of conservative discourse of the period, but Hardy did not share his views.



29, DELAMERE TERRACE,  
WESTBOURNE SQUARE. W.

1. 4. 97

My dear Hardy

It was the "World"  
which maddened me into taking  
up the cudgels in "the St. J. S."  
Tell me whether the latter,  
which I sent you last  
night, has cheered you up  
at all? Sheer unjust de-  
traction does lower one's  
vitality for the moment; it  
is an actual poison. My  
impression is that that review  
was written by some smart

Fig. 13a. Letter from Gosse to Hardy (1 April 1897: 1).  
Dorset County Museum archive, H.2722.

feather-headed woman, griding  
 some axe of her own. If  
 one only knew who wrote  
 these things, very often the  
 whole sting of them would  
 fade away. For instance,  
 the review of "Tess" which  
 annoyed us all so much,  
 as soon as one found  
 out that Mrs. Andrew  
 Lang had written it, -  
 what did it matter? I  
 dread more than any other

"sign of the times" the  
 prominence which women  
 are getting in journalism,  
 because women who scribble  
 are always ignorant,  
 generally malevolent, and  
 entirely unscrupulous. That  
 responsibility to keep high  
 the standard of the Best, for  
 its own sake, which is  
 the very spirit & blood of  
 an artist-man, seems to

Fig.13b. Letter from Gosse to Hardy (1 April 1897: 2-3).  
 Dorset County Museum archive, H.2722.



H. 2722

be "incomprehensible to a  
woman."

Ever yours sincerely  
Edmund Gosse

When, at the end of my  
second article, I spoke of  
"the Archais & the Marcias,"  
I meant Fielding's & <sup>W's</sup> ~~your~~  
Humphrey Ward's, not yours.

Fig. 13c. Letter from Gosse to Hardy (1 April 1897: 1).  
Dorset County Museum archive, H.2722.

While Gosse and Hardy maintained their friendship, I argue that differences in their social outlook at the turn of the century created a rupture in the collaborative nature of their discourse across private and public spheres. By contrast, during this period Hardy was also corresponding with other writers, such as Roden Noel, who offered more aligned ideas. When Noel wrote to Hardy in 1892 he shared his views on metaphysics and the human experience, to which Hardy replied that his letter had ‘started me off on a mental journey into the infinite’ (3 April 1892, *CL1*: 261):

Dear Mr Noel:

I returned from London last night, & was greeted by your note. I had hoped to write to you while there on the subjects opened up by your first letter: but as usual all my energy was consumed in locomotion. So far from being bored by your ideas as expressed in that letter I was deeply interested, & they started me off on a mental journey into the infinite — whatever that may be. I hope you will not mind my owing to a mistrust of metaphysic. My shyness arises from my consciousness of its paternity — that it is a sort of bastard, begotten of science upon theology — or, in another form, a halfway house between Deism & Materialism. It ultimately comes to this — such & such things *may* be. But they will ever be improbable: & since infinitely other things may also be, with equal probability, why select any one bundle of suppositions in preference to another? I prefer to relegate such thoughts to the domain of fancy, & to recognize them as pure imagination.

Still, there is a fascination in these labyrinths even when regarded as philosophy.

As to one thing you say: if the body be only sensations *plus* perceptions & concepts, then to hold that the ego may be related to many more forms of corporeity than the one our senses inform us of at present is a gratuitous assumption without ground. You may call the whole human race a single *ego* if you like; & in that view a man's consciousness may be said to pervade the world; but nothing is gained. Each is, to all knowledge, limited to his own frame. Or with Spinoza, & the late W. K. Clifford, you may call all matter mind-stuff (a very attractive idea this, to me) but you cannot find the link (at least I can't) of one form of consciousness with another.

What you, & so many more, have called Pessimism, is, after all, to be regarded as such only in respect to a fancy-standard. Pessimism is used arbitrarily of such views, say, as mine: but it is really only a relative term. Suppose the conditions of existence on this earth to change to such a degree that normal life becomes pervaded by a sensation equivalent to

what we now call pain, & the pains of that period to be what we now call tortures, our present pessimism will be optimism to those unhappy souls.

I too, believe in Byron — though less in what he says, than in what he struggles to say, yet cannot. He was a clumsy fellow — but I, for one, am always willing to meet him half way.

I am sorry you should have had trouble about placing the article. Most of the reviews have had their say — I forget if Scribner's has. But the American reviews & magazines are so difficult to get at. Believe me

Yours very truly

Thomas Hardy.

(3 April 1892 *CL* 1: 261-2)

In this we see a change in Hardy's style of correspondence. He seems more invigorated and open to the potential to fuse ideas in creative, intellectual stimulation. Andrew Norman suggests that Horace Moule introduced Hardy to socialism and through their friendship Hardy had 'recognised a kindred spirit: a person, like himself, of great sensitivity, who saw enormous suffering in the world and found it hard to bear' (57). In Noel, perhaps he had found another 'kindred spirit' and an affinity that was never quite identified in Gosse; this is not to suggest that his friendship with Gosse was any less significant but that Hardy, like so many of his contemporaries, benefited from a wide range of overlapping connections which could simultaneously exist in separate epistolary spaces.

## **2.7 Male friendship as Hellean comradeship**

Pooler argues that Gosse's 'background in criticism, biography and editing' meant that he could understand 'the author's fine balance between personal

and professional satisfaction' (79). Taking this further, I argue that Gosse's deep investment in the textual productions of his literary peers was intricately wrapped up in contemporary ideas of homosocial friendship. In a letter written to Hardy in 1906, Gosse effused:

How proud I am to think that I am allowed to stand a little nearer than the crowd, and to see your gifts unfold like the aloe blossom. You have always been to me among the first, and since dear R.L.S's death you have been without any rival [...] in the stimulating army of my contemporaries and betters. (26 February 1906)

The tone and language of Gosse's letters to Hardy reflect a highly emotional companionship which can be situated within the wider context of a society that placed great value on homosocial bonds. The endearing language of his letters reminds the reader of the commonplace occurrence in which men spoke freely of their deep attachment to one another in daily interactions. Gosse fashions himself as an admirer communicating with a beloved when he writes: 'Behold the shamelessness with which my blushing pen whispers "Do write me another of your precious & illuminating letters"' (21 February 1918). Issuing a passionately-charged compliment in parenthesis, he evokes the Ancient Greek conception of masculine desire: 'Your always, (a little worsen for your aphrodisiac nectar) Edmund Gosse' (16 March 1897). However, as this is a response to reading *The Well-Beloved*, the context of his affection becomes that of reader-appreciation and is a form of veneration. Gosse uses the letter form to convey the strength and endurance of his deeply-held feelings through sentimental and endearing language – but this is typically wrapped up in his concept of Hardy as a writer.

Marc Brodie and Barbara Caine note that '[e]xpressions of eternal love, or of a desire to kiss and caress the face of a friend, are the commonplace expressions of many same-sex Victorian friendships' (235) but, while this reveals a 'new focus on the emotional content of friendship' (235), at the same time homosocial relations between middle-class men were entering a period of transition. The prevalent cultural perception was that male friendship was of a nobler quality than marital love – or at least that 'these [were] friendships [that could] usually sit very comfortably alongside marriage (Brodie and Caine 233).<sup>28</sup> However, this model of male friendship was 'under threat as the privileged social world on which it depended [was] increasingly challenged' (Brodie and Caine 233). Challenges to the social framework included first wave feminism but also, during the latter years of the nineteenth century homosexuality emerged as a topic for public debate; there was growing concern to separate what could be defined as homosocial attachment from its homosexual counterpart. Some of Gosse's and Hardy's closest male friendships were developing against a cultural backdrop of the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act, of which Section 11 criminalised sexual contact between men, and the subsequent trials of Oscar Wilde during the 1890s (Thomas 1). For Gosse, this was a time of intense self-interrogation. At the early stages of his friendship with Hardy, Gosse was also experiencing an intense attachment to Hamo Thornycroft. In Evan Charteris's *The Life and Letters of Edmund Gosse* (1931), it is Gosse's letters to Hamo that stand out. As a narrative, his friendship with Hardy is slightly marginalised as only a handful of letters to Hardy are included, alongside numerous epistles to Thornycroft and Stevenson. Rictor Norton

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<sup>28</sup> See Eve Kosofsky Sedwick's seminal text *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985).

suggests that Gosse's letters to Thornycroft betray a sense of personal crisis which he could not consciously examine (n. pag.). Eve Sedgwick refers to the 'double bind' (2) in which intense male bonding was not only permitted but actively encouraged within the gendered spheres of society, while male passion that tipped over into sexual desire was socially and legally prohibited.

The late nineteenth-century use of the referential 'heroic comradeship' is attributed to the writer John Addington Symonds, who first used the phrase in 'A Problem in Greek Ethics' in 1893. In the same year he produced a comparative piece entitled 'The Dantesque and Platonic Ideals of Love' which posited contemporary masculine passion as a continuation of the heroic friendships experienced in Ancient Greece. Platonic love was shown to be a moral ideal in which a union between an elder, named the 'inspirer' or 'lover', and a younger male, identified as the 'hearer' or 'admired', created bonds of mutual affection that were socially permissive. In the nineteenth century, these heroic friendships moved from the battlegrounds of Ancient Greece to the salons and private men's clubs frequented by the artists, writers, philosophers, politicians and critics of the day. They also thrived within epistolary space. In letters to many of his literary friends, Gosse employed the affectionate vocative 'My dear Child'. The choice of phrase positions Gosse as the elder, ready to publicly fight to defend the youth. The term also bridges an emotional distance by laying claim to a familial bond.

Hardy's friendship with the Oxbridge undergraduate Horace Moule can be read as a precursor to the dynamic which Gosse and Hardy developed. Moule and

Hardy enjoyed a close companionship through the middle decades of the nineteenth century. In the 1870s, Moule committed suicide and the loss was felt deeply by Hardy. Millgate suggests that Hardy's connection with Moule was of a deeper emotional attachment than with any of his other male friends (66); Robert Gittings argues that Hardy 'felt for Moule in some way as Shakespeare did for his friend, and as Tennyson did for Hallam' (182).<sup>29</sup> Moule was eight years older than Hardy and their friendship fitted the model of 'inspirer' and 'hearer'. Like Gosse, their connection was enriched by a shared love of Dorset, as well as literary interests. The few letters from Moule that remain reveal how he adopted the role of literary mentor, the Platonic 'elder'. Writing in the 1860s, when Hardy was at the very start of his literary ambitions, Moule advised him to read the works of others not for style but for the stimulation of his own thoughts: 'The grand object of all in learning to write well is to gain or generate something to say' (26 July 1861). The easy assurance of Moule's letters to Hardy reflected his general patronage of Hardy as a young writer to whom he could impart relative wisdom. Although Gosse was nine years Hardy's junior, the position of seniority adopted in many of his letters can be seen as a conscious self-construction as Platonic elder.

Only a fragment of the earliest of Gosse's letters remains in the archive, bearing no date. However, as Gosse gives his opinion of the *Trumpet Major*, which he refers to as 'a great book', it is possible to place the letter in the year 1880 when

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<sup>29</sup> Given that Hardy's letters to Moule appear to have been destroyed, inferences about the strength of his feelings have largely been drawn from the poems inspired by his friend, such as 'Standing by the Mantlepiece' which bore the subtitle: H. M. M., 1873.

Hardy's historical novel was published. At this stage in his career, Gosse was accepted as an influential literary authority, and he provided the sort of constructive criticism which Hardy had previously gained from Horace Moule: '[there is a] hard pulse of humanity [that runs] through [the novel] – what I miss in almost all other English fiction of our day and always find in you' (n.d.).

*Father and Son* documents Gosse's Plymouth Brethren upbringing and the value he placed on the 'cardinal virtue' of friendship in his adult life. At the turn of the century Gosse wrote to Hardy:

I hold it a very great privilege that so many years of my life have run parallel with those of one whom I admire so whole-heartedly as I do you: and I would pray (if I knew a God to pray to) that we may yet have a goodly term of life to spend in a friendship so precious to me. (3 June 1910)

The parenthesised comment 'if I knew a God to pray to' highlights his point of commonality with Hardy as contemporaries experiencing a post-Darwinian society, and the sentimental language of friendship reiterates the earthly pleasures he had chosen to invest in. In this regard, Gosse upheld the Victorian view that friendship was as important a form of attachment as marital and familial bonds.

Hardy seems to have shared this view of friendship, as his *Literary Notebooks* suggest:

I am one who from my childhood upward have set my heart upon a certain thing...I have a passion for friends; & I would rather have a good friend than the best cock or quail in the world: I would even go further &



say than a horse or a dog...all the gold of Darius, or even Darius himself.” Soc.53 (1: 46)

Have friends. – It is the second existence. Every friend is good and wise for his friends, & among them all (one gets well managed.) Every man will be worth just so much as other people please, & in order that they may please, one has to gain their mouths by their hearts...The most & best that we have depends upon others; we must live either amongst friends or amongst enemies. Try every day to acquire one, not exactly to be a near friend but to be a well-wisher. Some will later, after they have gone through a period of probation, remain behind as confidential friends. Baltasar Gracian (1: 93)

It seems likely that Hardy would have encountered this through his reading of Schopenhauer who translated Gracian’s *Art of Worldly Wisdom* and praised his philosophy in his own writing. If this conveys an understanding of existence beyond a solipsistic state, then it suggests that recognising oneself in others was an important part of the value and sentiment of friendship for Hardy and his contemporaries. Through dialogue with friends, we might learn to know ourselves in a truer sense.

By constructing a language of friendship in their letters, and bringing it frequently into their shared narrative, the bond between Gosse and Hardy was enriched, notwithstanding the differences between them that became more marked. Henry Clay Trumbull, a missionary in America, wrote a treatise in 1894 entitled *Friendship the Master-Passion*; he insisted on the importance of friendship:

The common thought is, that ‘love’ and ‘friendship’ merely differentiate degrees of affection; and that intensity and devotedness are the distinguishing characteristics of ‘love’ in comparison with ‘friendship’. But the place given in both classic and sacred story to the illustrations of self-sacrificing friendship proves that no lack of depth and fervor limits the

force and sway of this expression of personal attachment. Greater love hath no man than that love which is shown in friendship, at its best and truest manifestation. (17)

Trumbull dedicated the work to his wife — ‘the best illustration I ever knew of a life of self-forgetful friendship’ — but within the text he also explored the potential for this same level of self-sacrificing friendship to exist outside of matrimony.

Although Gosse sustained friendships with both men and women, I argue that he privileged male relationships, whereas for Hardy, comrade was a genderless term.<sup>30</sup> In their letters and Gosse’s review writing of both *Jude* and *Tess*, gender politics became a point of departure within their friendship. Situating their differing views within the wider context of contemporary debate, Anne Thackeray questioned homocentric values attributed to friendship in her 1874 essay ‘In Friendship’:

People say that as a rule, men are truer friends than women – more capable of friendship. Is this the result of classical education? Do the foot-notes in which celebrated friendships are mentioned in brackets stimulate our youth to imitate those stately togas? (289)

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<sup>30</sup> In chapter two I explore the importance of heterosocial friendship in Hardy’s life as a second case study within the double biography framework.

## 2.8 Conclusions

For Hardy, postal communication connected him with those who could appreciate his work and offer constructive criticism alongside much needed praise and encouragement. While gender politics might have created an undercurrent of tension between Gosse and Hardy, the pair enjoyed a friendship across five decades. Alongside substantial correspondence from Leslie Stephen, Hamo Thornycroft and Siegfried Sassoon, Gosse's letters are a significant feature within the archive because they offer an opportunity for a sustained dialogue to be reconstructed.

When old age prevented frequent meetings, the Gosse-Hardy epistolary exchange was even more fundamental to the enduring nature of their friendship. In 1919 Gosse wrote to thank Hardy for 'the unbroken record of nearly forty-five years of precious intercourse' and looked forward to when they could 'celebrate our Jubilee of Friendship' (25 September 1919). Similarly, in June 1912 Gosse had declared: 'If we live two years more (and we will) our friendship will have lasted 40 years' (21 June 1912). Viewed as a form of portable affection, Gosse's letters always struck a balance between discussion of literary matters and affirmations of friendship. As Lynch argues, the existence of a non-familial bond is created, recognised and sustained through discourse (173); Gosse used the epistolary space to build a language of friendship. Birthday letters, in particular, can be read as markers not only of time but of intimacy. On Hardy's birthday in June 1925, Gosse addresses him as 'My dear Friend'. Typically he wrote to 'My dear Hardy', so this subtle change in

salutation commemorates their relationship: 'I grieve that we meet so seldom [...] You are very often, and very gratefully and tenderly in my thoughts – gratefully for the long friendship which has been to me such a treasure' (1 June 1925). In his biography of Gosse, Evan Charteris highlights Gosse's effusive expressions of friendship, which was 'not a light to be hidden under a bushel [...] it was to be regarded and spoken of even to the verge of temerity in expression' (108). Gosse, as correspondent, used a generous vocabulary to shower his recipient in words presented as gifts.

Gosse also conveyed intimacy in his chosen subscription, which evolved from 'I am always, dear Friend yours sincerely Edmund Gosse' in 1887 in the early years of their friendship to 'your faithful and affectionate old friend' and 'your ancient friend' when they were both in their last few years of life. Whereas kinship ties are clearly understood between participants, there is more impetus in written communication between non-relatives to secure the abstract construct of friendship by employing overt references.

In reaching a point of conclusion, I wish to end with this photograph of Gosse and Hardy, taken in the penultimate year of both of their lives (Figure 14). The image portrays a closeness and easy intimacy between the two friends. Gosse sits with one of the much-loved Max Gate cats on his lap; the pair are inclined towards one another and seem to have been captured in a moment of absorbing conversation. The photograph also echoes a much earlier moment in their friendship, when Gosse – an avid amateur photographer – sent a range of pictures to Hardy to commemorate one of his Dorset visits. Hardy commented

in his reply on 5 October 1890: 'The most interesting to me is where we are standing together – you & I' (*CL* 1: 271).<sup>31</sup> The syntactical positioning of the pronouns 'you & I' mirrors the image of the two friends standing next to one another and suggests that a deep value had been placed on their friendship even at this early stage.



**Fig. 14. Thomas Hardy with Edmund Gosse. Max Gate, Dorchester (27 June 1927) Dorset County Museum archive.**

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<sup>31</sup> The photograph Hardy refers to in his letter has not been retained as an enclosure and so cannot be reproduced here. This issue presents an argument for re-cataloguing photographs and letters together in order to restore original context.

### 3. Thomas Hardy and Florence Henniker: a friendship in letters

My dear friend:

Best thanks for yr last nice long letter, full of news. Also very many thanks for the fine poem in the "Sphere". There are beautiful lines in it. But of course it is very sad.

(Florence Henniker to Thomas Hardy 17 January 1914)

Personal, or familiar, letters have long been regarded as a marker of friendship. The act of sending communication across a distance preserves a closer level of familiarity than location necessarily allows. In this way personal correspondence functions as a way of knowing someone through the process of *dislocation*. This is enhanced by the physicality of a handwritten letter which preserves elements of its sender, meaning that even a glance at a handwritten envelope could supplant the act of meeting. Sustained correspondence with a particular friend also allows the style of writing, as well as the selected contents, to function as a linguistic fingerprint; over time two familiar interlocutors – for letter exchanges are really a form of protracted conversation – will adopt a manner that is instantly familiar to one another, beginning with a personalised salutation that is repeated in all correspondence. While it is often claimed (Weber & Weber 1968, Benziman 2013, Koehler 2016) that Hardy used epistolary communication in a guarded way, in the case of his thirty-year friendship with fellow writer and English aristocrat the Hon. Mrs Florence Henniker, a different interpretation emerges. In this chapter I examine how Hardy and Henniker's friendship was negotiated within and strengthened by their sustained communication through

letters. It is their platonic relationship that I wish to draw attention to. A number of biographies and literary studies advance such declaratives as ‘Hardy met and fell in love with Florence Henniker at Dublin Castle in 1893’ which encourage readings of the relationship between Hardy and Henniker as one of unrequited love. For instance, Michael Millgate suggests that Hardy was ‘looking for someone to fall in love with’ as relations with his wife, Emma, became more estranged (309). This biographical assumption has been reinforced by the existence of a published volume of Hardy’s letters to Henniker, entitled *One Rare, Fair Woman*, which has propelled the romantic plotline; Henniker is fixed as the object of desire in the title and we are only able to view her through Hardy’s epistles to her. Therefore the mediated form in which the letters are encountered further restricts understanding of their relationship to the gender codes that dominated the Victorian period. However, within the framework of ‘writing lives together’ (James and North 133), I offer an alternative reading of their friendship.

Hardy and Henniker’s letter exchange began in June 1893, just a few weeks after they first met, and continued for almost thirty years, only ending with Henniker’s death in 1923. Both sets of the original letters exist within the same archive, allowing the original dialogue to be restored through the process of digitisation and text-encoded transcriptions.<sup>32</sup> There is nevertheless a disparity between the one hundred and fifty letters sent by Hardy and the thirty eight which have survived from Henniker from 1906 onwards. Where possible, I have re-established the dialogue between these two literary figures to understand the role that letter-writing played in their relationship. In this chapter, I argue that

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<sup>32</sup> See Appendix 1 for a sample of letters from Hardy’s and Henniker’s correspondence.

both the form and the practice of epistolary conversations offered a space between the public and private spheres in which Victorian heterosexual friendships could exist with platonic legitimacy.

There has been little exploration of cross-gender friendships of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries beyond Victor Luftig's monograph in 1995. Even the comprehensive study, *Friendship: A History* (2009), edited by Barbara Caine, does not consider friendships between the sexes in its chapters on the long nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In this chapter I foreground the nature of Hardy and Henniker's friendship within the context of cross-gender relations. Sharon Marcus suggests that in 'a liberal society that idealized self-development and sifting opinion through argument, *female* friendship epitomized John Stuart Mill's dream of subjectivity as dialogue' (4 italics added). I extend this claim to male-female friendship at this time. Mark Peel considers how, in the early twentieth century, 'friendship among women [...] changed its meanings and possibilities' (281) but the same can be said of friendships between men and women that were not merely a prelude to courtship or extramarital affairs.<sup>33</sup>

Hardy met Florence Henniker, wife of the Honourable Arthur Henniker-Major, in May 1893 at a time when his fame was established and the success of *Tess* (despite hostile reviews) meant that he could spend the entire London season in

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<sup>33</sup> Mark Peel explores new forms of friendship in the twentieth century in 'New Worlds of Friendship: The Early Twentieth Century'. *Friendship: A History*. Barbara Caine. Ed. London, Oakville: Equinox, 2009, 279-311. However, he does not reflect on heterosexual friendships within his discussion.



comfort in Maida Vale (Figure 15). Moving more confidently in elevated circles, that year he was invited to attend an event in Dublin as the guest of Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, Lord Houghton and his sister Florence. Henniker was educated, composed and elegant. She excelled in the role of host at her brother's home. That she would be drawn to Hardy's company was natural given that she had already published three reasonably well-received novels<sup>34</sup> and was known for befriending other men and women of letters.



**Fig. 15. Florence Ellen Hungerford Milnes Henniker c. 1893**

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<sup>34</sup> *Sir George* (1891); *Bid Me Good-bye* (1892); *Foiled* (1893)

Hardy opens his first extant letter, dated 3 June 1893, with the formal salutation 'Dear Mrs Henniker' (*CL* 2: 10). This establishes the parameters of male-female correspondence which acknowledges her married status and adheres to the conventions of Victorian letter-writing etiquette. This choice of address is then used in the first seventeen letters of their correspondence, until October 1893. However, by contrast, the opening sentence of this first letter does read more as an epistle in an early courtship. Hardy reveals how Henniker has occupied his thoughts and pushes for renewed social contact: 'I was beginning to wonder if you would be here [in London], and I much desire to go somewhere with you' (*CL* 2:10). The indefinite pronoun 'somewhere' emphasises that what is important is to spend time in her company, under whatever social guise. He then informs her – 'I have nothing to do next week from Monday till Thursday' – placing Henniker in a privileged position through his availability. There is also a playful tone to the letter:

I have already obtained the books, and should have sent them on to you, but I want to ask you something first. I will accordingly keep them till we meet.

I have nothing to do next week from Monday till Thursday that is of any consequence. But I have a dreadful confession to make. In a weak moment I have accepted an invitation to lunch, to meet

John Oliver Hobbes!

She is very pretty, they say, but on my honour that had nothing to do with it – purely literary reasons only. (3 June 1893, *CL* 2: 10)

Hardy's admission that he is withholding certain items to give to her only in person is suggestive of flirtatious teasing and his 'dreadful confession' that he will be meeting the 'very pretty' John Oliver Hobbes – Mrs Pearl Craigie – might have been designed to illicit feelings of jealousy. However, at the same time Hardy attempts to maintain a level of indirectness and the ambiguous reference to discussion which cannot take place in a letter ('I want to ask you something

first') highlights the potentially socially restrictive space of written communication.

In their first year of meeting Hardy expressed disappointment that Henniker was far from the Shelleyan ideal he had imagined her to be:

I too have been reading 'Epipsychidion' — indeed by mutual influence we must have been reading it simultaneously. I had a regret in reading it at thinking that one who is pre-eminently the child of Shelleyan tradition — whom one would have expected to be an ardent disciple of his school and views — should have allowed herself to be enfeebled to a belief in ritualistic ecclesiasticism. My impression is that you do not know your own views. You feel the need of emotional expression of some sort, and being surrounded by the conventional society form of such expression you have mechanically adopted it. (16 July 1893, *CL* 2: 23)

Luftig argues that Hardy was one of the Victorian 'Shelley enthusiasts' (107) who invoked the Romantic poet as an emblem of 'every gender-related tension and ambiguity' (96). However, if, in striking up a correspondence with Henniker a few weeks after their first meeting, Hardy's goal was to woo a woman he hoped would be his Shelleyan ideal, it seems to have only been a transitional phase in their relationship. Pursuing a biographical reading of *Jude the Obscure*, Luftig suggests that the novel 'reflects Hardy's willingness to adopt utter resignation when unable to preserve heterosexual relations in just the way he desired' (119). For Luftig, Jude and Sue's relationship is presented as untenable because Hardy was unable to experience a successful equivalent in his personal life. However, this argument rests on the assumption that Henniker was a woman Hardy 'failed to seduce' (Luftig 118). Such a reading ignores the development and evolution of their relationship over a period of almost three decades. Following a Millian train of thought, Hardy is eager to set Henniker free from dogma and tradition in his initial letters. Yet, over the course

of their friendship respect for each other's differing opinions allowed more honest, open conversation. A novel element in the Hardy-Henniker friendship was their ability to be mutually sympathetic to one another while at the same time possessing opposing views on some of the most fundamental issues of human existence – most notably religion and the Marriage Question. At times when Hardy was feeling more taciturn, his manner of expression indicates a sense of regret that their views were not more aligned, for instance when he decides not to send Henniker *Satires of Circumstance* 'as I know you won't like them, or some of them. We have drifted so far apart in our views of late years' (17 March 1911, *CL* 4: 143). Nevertheless, Henniker's reply must have expressed reassurance and encouragement as in his subsequent letter he writes: 'In your last very charming letter (you *can* write them when you choose) you say you wd like to see those poems' (3 May 1911, *CL* 4:151). While Evelyn Hardy and Frank Pinion note that Henniker 'opposed Hardy's views more strongly as time went on' (15), at no point did this affect the warmth of feeling towards one another. Rather, it shows that Henniker and Hardy communicated as equals.

In recent years the critic Richard Sylvia's interest in Henniker has done much to 'suggest a basis on which to revise – if not recast – the nature of the Hardy/Henniker friendship as it developed in the mid-1890s' ('Florence Henniker's' 140). What becomes evident in the context of the Victorian fin de siècle is the way in which their early correspondence was a space for negotiation of the terms of a male-female friendship. Just two months into their acquaintance, on one of their many outings that summer, it appears that

Henniker clarified the boundaries of their relationship, making it clear that there would never be an illicit affair; On this occasion the pair had arranged to meet at Eastleigh station in order to go to Winchester Cathedral and it seems that Henniker took the opportunity to engage in frank dialogue within a private railway carriage. In a letter dated 17 August 1893, Hardy refers guardedly to their meeting:

If I shd never write to you again as in that letter you must remember that it was written before you expressed your views — “morbid” indeed! Petty rather — in the railway carriage when we met at Eastleigh. (*CL* 2: 27-28)

The epistle that Hardy refers to as ‘that letter’ no longer exists — either it was destroyed by Henniker herself or, if it was still among the collection returned to Florence Hardy upon her death, it was more than likely thrown onto the second bonfire at Max Gate. Hardy’s comments convey a tone of wounded pride but we cannot be sure exactly what Henniker’s ‘morbid’ views related to.

While the correspondence between Henniker and Hardy did not break down during the early stages there was cause for several re-negotiations of how sender and recipient wanted to be perceived by one another. Crucially, Hardy was keen to re-establish their communication whenever it became strained and the very form of the letter allowed him to express his frustrations. For example in October 1893 Hardy wrote ‘[our] letters have grown trollish again of late’ and ‘I cannot enter into [important matters] till a distinct postal communication is re-established between us’ (6 October 1893, *CL* 2: 35-6). The comment refers to their epistolary discussions of a shared literary endeavour – the co-authoring of a short story entitled ‘The Spectre of the Real’ (1894). Hardy was also keen to emphasise that the letter form provided a unique space for two individuals to

share a protected intimacy. When he discovered that Henniker had read some of his early letters aloud to friends, he chastised: 'I have always a feeling that such publicity destroys the pleasure of friendly correspondence' (16 September 1893, *CL* 2: 32).

During the initial stages of their acquaintance Hardy appears to have sought to establish a master-pupil dynamic to cement their shared interest in writing. However, and as both Pamela Dalziel and Sylvia have stressed, by the time they met in 1893 Henniker was already a fellow author, not a literary pupil. In this respect, their dynamic was different to the way in which Hardy had acted as a mentor to support the literary endeavours of Evangeline Smith prior to meeting Henniker.<sup>35</sup> Although many of Henniker's early letters to Hardy have not survived, Sylvia has brought to light letters between Clement Shorter and Henniker which show that on several occasions in the 1890s she chose to reject Hardy's suggested changes to her work ('Florence Henniker's' 139).

Admittedly though, when Hardy and Henniker co-authored their short story, Hardy asserted a level of literary mastery by completely re-writing Henniker's ending and it was this version that initially appeared in print. However, subsequent letters reveal how Hardy was able to contemplate, explore and succeed in achieving a platonic friendship, not within the pages of co-authored fiction but within the space of written correspondence. Differences in gender, class and literary stature were overcome through the steady back-and-forth rhythm of their letters, allowing a framework of equality to be established. As

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<sup>35</sup> For a detailed exploration of Hardy's literary protégées see Shanta Dutta's *Ambivalence in Hardy: A Study of his Attitudes to Women*. Basingstoke and London: Macmillan Press, 2000.

their friendship progressed into the new century, and, crucially, through the war years, their letters bear witness to the changes the two individuals experienced in their own lives, in their relationship with one another and in the world in which they lived. Their letters represent a way in which men and women could engage in successful collaboration as part of a new world vision.

Married in 1882, Henniker appears to have held conventional views of marriage, though she was accustomed to more liberated relations between men and women on an intellectual level. Rather than solely experiencing the separate gendered spheres that characterised the Victorian period, in her youth Henniker had become acclimatised to the companionship of her father, Richard Monckton Milnes, and his male friends, who included various politicians and men of letters. In support of this, Sylvia has shown that, at the same time that Henniker was maintaining correspondence with Hardy, she was also regularly writing to the radical Irish MP John Dillon about Irish Home Rule, between 1894 and 1896. Nevertheless, Sylvia can only perceive Dillon as Hardy's rival for Henniker's affections. If friendship presents a challenge to accustomed categories of male-female relations, it is not only a problem for the Victorians but for more recent evaluation too. Sylvia vacillates between depicting Henniker's feelings for Dillon as those of an infatuated lover and as 'an exciting, deeply personal friendship' (144). What needs unpicking is what was required to make it 'exciting' – a sexualised element of desire or the thrill of a meeting of minds on social issues of great importance? The description of the friendship as 'deeply personal' nonetheless implicitly suggests a need to acknowledge

profounder levels of affection along friendship lines without bringing in a sexual component.

When read together there seems little in Henniker's letters to determine whether or not she had any romantic attachment to Dillon. Even one particular line in a letter which Sylvia argues is most revealing of Henniker's passionate feelings can be reinterpreted instead in terms of the potential of the letter form to transcend physical distances and create mental proximity: Henniker's adverbial comment 'Here, in my room, I find Mr. O'Brien's novel, with its touching dedication to you' (29 October 1894, qtd. in Sylvia 155) forms part of letter-writing convention in which the writer seeks to orientate the recipient to the physical space occupied during composition. Henniker's thirty-five unpublished letters to Dillon therefore simply provide additional support to indicate that she was accustomed to productive, meaningful but fundamentally platonic friendships with men. Writing to Dillon in December 1894 Henniker celebrates how effectively she argued against her Irish brother-in-law on the question of Home Rule. The epistolary text gives her room to explain that it is a result of having 'the uncomfortable sort of mind...that can see both sides' (3 December 1894, qtd. in Sylvia 149) – in which the gender-neutral image of the 'mind' allows her to shape the constructed self that she presents to Dillon and enable him to engage with her on an intellectual level.

Henniker's self-governing spirit comes through in the very first extant letter to Hardy, written in 1906. On the issue of architectural design, Henniker's manner



of expression shows that she was comfortable enough to display views that were in direct opposition to Hardy's. Having recently read his address on church restoration in the *Cornhill Magazine*,<sup>36</sup> Henniker states her own opinions in a free manner: 'And as to Georgian pews – I think they had far better go' before underlining her view by referring to them as an 'eyesore' (27 August 1906). Hardy's reply two weeks later shows an acceptance that their friendship was not reliant on complete cognitive assonance: 'Evidently we shall never agree about all things connected therewith, e.g. the high, old Georgian pews, which I love' (12 September 1906, *CL* 3: 224). Nevertheless, the placement of 'which I love' at the end of the sentence conveys a greater degree of emotional charge and reminds the reader of previous attempts to make Henniker his architectural, as well as his literary pupil. In June 1893, as each was developing in their communications a sense of self as they wished to be perceived by the other, Hardy had expressed his wish for Henniker 'to walk into a church and pronounce upon its date at a glance: and you are apt scholar enough to soon arrive at that degree of knowledge' (7 June 1893, *CL* 2: 11). Despite an initial interest in developing her knowledge of architecture – to aid the descriptive detail in her fiction – it seems unlikely that Henniker adopted the role of pupil in real earnest. And yet, in positioning her as an 'apt scholar' it encouraged intellectual discussion to enter their correspondence. In viewing her as a cerebral companion they achieved a greater level of communicative closeness as their friendship progressed.

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<sup>36</sup> 'Memories of Church Restoration' August, 1906

One of the strongest examples of this intellectual intimacy comes through in Hardy's letter of 3 October 1911 in which he writes: 'I was *much* interested in your criticism of *The New Machiavelli* [by H.G. Wells] and have been saving up powder and shot for replying to your arguments' (CL 4: 177). The tone of this response, along with the militaristic language, displays a sense of relish at an intellectual 'battle'. He then expresses his views on marriage powerfully and emotively, echoing his exploration of marriages in *Jude*: 'Half the misery of human life would I think disappear if this [divorce] were made easy' (CL 4:177). Knowing that Henniker would stay firm to her beliefs, he nevertheless seems to look forward to the chance to 'discuss the question when we are together', suggesting that points of discussion that were introduced in their letters often continued when they conversed in person (CL 4: 177).

Henniker was another ever-present voice in Hardy's study. Their letters are one long conversation about the literary landscape as it shifted and reformed through the 1890s and into the new century. Part of their epistolary gift exchange involved the sending and receiving of new literature, as shown in this letter written in November 1913:

I am going to send you a very small vol – of really charming poems by Miss Wedmore. I think "England" & "The Grand Duke's funeral" especially good. I hope she will have the praise she deserves from some of the critics. Sir F. Wedmore gave a very interesting poetry reading the other eve. in Sevenoaks. He read from your "Bereft" & "The rash Bride" (The latter particularly well, I thought.)

Also a beautiful little poem "Twilight" by Masfield, which I am sure would appeal to you – & a lovely little lyric "Denny's Daughter" by Moira O'Neill, – intensely pathetic in its simplicity. Do you know about it? I wonder if you are writing more verse now? (Henniker to Hardy, 20 November 1913)

There is equality in their continued discussion about literary works and Henniker's voice is one of critic and fellow writer. Where they seemed to have differed most is in their views of J.M. Barrie. Barrie was also a good friend of Hardy's, and their correspondence indicates mutual admiration of each other's work. However, Henniker mentions several times that she is far from impressed:

P.S. I think it is absurd to have given the "O.M." to Sir James Barrie! [...] If there is no one really worth of the honour, why not wait until there is? (Henniker to Hardy, 10 March 1922)

I read some of Sir J. Barrie's address. I think an undue fuss is made about him. It is a sort of odd craze on the part of the Press. (Henniker to Hardy, 5 May 1922)

That Hardy could maintain separate friendships with Barrie and Henniker, while accommodating Henniker's critical opinions of Barrie in their correspondence, is another example of the individual and intimate nature of epistolary communication.

Correspondence enabled a space between the private and the public spheres in which Henniker's voice was given equal weight to her male counterparts. For instance, when Hardy brings politics into a letter dated 23 March 1915, he says how puzzled he is 'as to the attitude of Lord Morley and John Burns in resigning office' before looking to Henniker for an informed opinion based on her social position and military links. Hardy appears to have valued their mental companionship – Henniker is someone he can discuss these matters with freely and ask: 'how can he hold that we ought not to have fought? Perhaps you can solve this conundrum?' (CL 5: 87).

By restoring their epistolary dialogue, Henniker's fulsome reply can be read in the online database directly after Hardy's question:

I should very much like to hear Lord Morley & John Burns give their views privately. Both are men of much greater honesty & finer character than many other members of this Cabinet. I suppose they would say it is a case of choosing the least of two evils, & that it was morally worse to cause such misery to this/their country than to shirk helping France? It is a curious point of view, but no doubt sincere, & in John Burns' case it is almost heroic to give up power & influence – (wh. must mean so much to him) as well as money. – (31 March 1915)

In reviving epistolary conversations, examination of this collection has also highlighted the multi-vocality of correspondence in which male and female voices exist together in extended and overlapping discussion. For instance, in a letter written in February 1906, Hardy sought Henniker's opinion on the January elections which saw increased support for the Liberal politician Campbell-Bannerman. After posing a question, Hardy then weaves in the words of Frederic Harrison which would have otherwise remained contained in a separate thread of correspondence:

Well what do you think of the Elections? Frederic Harrison in writing to me, calls it a 'revolution'. I tell him it is a revolution in which the weapons are criss-crosses and black lead pencils instead of bayonets and barricades. (11 February 1906, *CL* 3: 196)

This shows an opening out of ideas shared with others to enable ongoing thought and it is regrettable that Henniker's reply does not exist for this particular network of opinions to be rebuilt. In both *On Liberty* and his *Autobiography*, J.S. Mill suggested that development came from individual contemplation and 'working through' of ideas, which worked to prevent unquestioning societal conformity (*On Liberty* 105). For Mill, free discussion enabled a person to become 'an original and independent thinker' (*On Liberty* 105). He advocated participation in discussion groups as a way of engendering social change through private conversation that then filtered through to public

discourse. In this way, the wider web of different interlocutors' thoughts and views shared in Hardy and Henniker's correspondence reveals the potential for one-to-one conversations to overlap and extend beyond an individual's sphere. Both Hardy and Henniker read Mill's works, as indicated in their epistolary dialogue in September 1895 when Hardy remarked: 'I am rather surprised at your reading any book by J.S. Mill – and still more that you agree with him on anything' (3 September 1895, *CL* 2: 86). As Henniker's previous letter in this exchange has not survived, we cannot be certain which of Mill's texts she had been reading but Hardy's decision to put *On Liberty* in the hands of his character Sue Bridehead in *Jude* might be one of the ways in which the development of Sue's character can be said to have been influenced by Henniker. *Jude* first appeared as the serialised version *Hearts Insurgent* in *Harper's New Monthly* from December 1894 to November 1895. In the June 1895 instalment (Figure 16a), Sue Bridehead asks to live away from her husband, Phillotson and refers to her desire to live 'as I choose'(121). When the novel was published in book form later that year (Figure 16b), Sue's discussion with her husband had been altered to include a reference to Mill:

Sue continued: "She, or he, 'who lets the world, or his own portion of it, choose his plan of life for him, has no need of any other faculty than the ape-like one of imitation.' J.S. Mill's words, those are." (*Jude* 324)

"And do you mean, by living away from me, living by yourself?"

"Well, if you insisted, yes. But I meant living as I choose. Perhaps with my cousin as a companion."

"Soos-an! Do you mind my saying that I have guessed what never once occurred to me before our marriage—that you were in love, and are in love, with Jude Fawley?"

"You may go on guessing that I am, since you have begun. But do you suppose that if I had been I should have asked you to let me go and live with him?"

The ringing of the school bell saved Phillotson from the necessity of replying

Fig. 16a. Extract from *Hearts Insurgents*. Harper's New Monthly, June 1895.

"And do you mean, by living away from me, living by yourself?"

"Well, if you insisted, yes. But I meant living with Jude."

Sue continued: "She, or he, 'who lets the world, or his own portion of it, choose his plan of life for him, has no need of any other faculty than the ape-like one of imitation.' J. S. Mill's words, those are. Why can't you act upon them? I wish to, always."

"What do I care about J. S. Mill!" moaned he. "I only want to lead a quiet life! Do you mind my saying that I have guessed what never once occurred to me before our marriage—that you were in love, and are in love, with Jude Fawley!"

"You may go on guessing that I am, since you have begun. But do you suppose that if I had been I should have asked you to let me go and live with him?"

The ringing of the school-bell saved Phillotson from

Figure 16b. Extract from *Jude the Obscure*. 1895.

Although Hardy expressed surprise that Henniker was engaging with Millian ideas, it seems that their own extended dialogue epitomised what Mill saw as the ideal form of conversation. Writing in 1882, Alexander Bain's recollections of Mill include an observation of his discourse style:

He never lectured or declaimed, or engrossed the talk. He paused at due intervals, to hear what others had to say; and not merely heard, but took in, and embodied that in his reply. With him, talk was, what it ought to be, an exchange of information, thought and argument, when it assumed the form of discussion; and an exchange of sympathies when the feelings were concerned. (189 qtd. in Hookway 153)

Here 'talk' could easily be substituted for 'correspondence', as the delay between letters, and the generic element of embodying the interlocutor's comments within written replies, facilitated careful and contemplative discussion.

### 3.1 The politics of male-female friendship

Sylvia suggests that Henniker did not view herself as a New Woman and Hardy's letters indicate that he also distinguished her from this construct. For instance, in a letter dated 15 February 1899, Hardy draws a quick pen portrait of the image of the New Woman: 'Had you been a "woman-writer" struggling with a pen in a Grub Street garret' (*CL* 2:215). While this might be more an observation of class difference, the placement of the inverted commas around 'woman-writer' seems to also be a way of separating Henniker from the New Woman label. However, in many ways she filled the brief. Typically her fiction supported the status quo in terms of gender relations (e.g. *Sir George* 1891 and *Bid Me Good-bye* 1892)<sup>37</sup> but in her third novel *Foiled* (1893) she seems to look more fluidly at gender roles and in her short story 'In a Rhineland Valley' (1903) she explores the idea of a woman who enjoys her liberty too much to marry at a young age. In addition to her literary successes, Henniker was a woman of letters in the fullest sense, occupying the position of President of the Society of Women Journalists in 1896.<sup>38</sup> Her aristocratic status may have enabled her to take on such roles but she certainly appeared to have been a driven and assertive woman who regarded herself as an equal to her male peers; as a result her belief in the ability for men and women to exist as friends and colleagues can be viewed as what William Deresiewicz has referred to in his study of friendship as a 'political demand' (n.pag.) within the context of first-wave feminism. Hardy recognised this aspect of their friendship when he wrote:

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<sup>37</sup> For a full exploration and homosocial reading of Henniker's fiction, see Richard Sylvia's 'Rereading Florence Henniker: Society, Romance and Homosocial Desire in *Sir George* and *Foiled*'. *English Literature in Transition* 46:1 2003 55-70.

<sup>38</sup> As recorded in *Who Was Who in Literature 1906-1934*.

You are a real woman of letters: and must be invited to the next Mansion House dinner to literature. It was lively there last night: but many ladies did not come, I am told, because their husbands were not invited – So much for their independence. (2 July 1893, CL 2: 215)

During the latter part of the nineteenth century, the concept of cross-gender friendships formed part of wider feminist debates. In 1899 an active feminist who supported the women's trade union, Priscilla E. Moulder, produced an argumentative piece for the *Westminster Review*, entitled 'Friendship Between the Sexes', in which she drew attention to both the narrow perspectives of male-female relationships within society and the limits in language used to express these relations:

men are apt to think that women are like so many ripe peaches, ready to drop into the masculine arms as soon as the tree is shaken, while the vanity of women cannot rest contented with a mere friend and comrade but must have a lover. (668)

The use of 'mere' suggests that friendship was somewhere beneath the love reserved for matrimony and at the same time implies that male-female friendship was so doubtfully non-sexual that any existence of a platonic union had to be explicitly labelled as a negation of sexual desire. Writing in 1897, Mona Caird had also written against the self-limiting practice of a society that declared friendship between men and women impossible:

Nor will the world really be a pleasant world while it continues to make friendship between persons of opposite sexes well-nigh impossible, by insisting that they *are* so, and thereby, in a thousand direct and indirect ways, bringing about the fulfilment of its own prophecy. (103)

The reference to a 'thousand direct and indirect ways' is suggestive of the effect of social conditioning, in which males and females are almost unconsciously encouraged to view each other as potential matrimonial matches from a young age.



Victor Luftig's study of friendship has documented the multiplicity of meanings carried by the term in the 1890s, creating a complexity by which it could mean an extramarital sexual affair in one context and a new model of sexless relations between men and women in another. Some twenty years later Hardy raised the issue of cross-gender friendship in a letter to Henniker in 1911:

It occurred to me the other day that this year completes the eighteenth of our friendship. That is rather good as between man and woman, which is usually so brittle. (22 August 1911, *CL* 4: 168)

That Hardy alludes to the gendered element of their friendship shows that it was still not a widely accepted social possibility, even within literary circles. Although Deresiewicz suggests that early twentieth-century attitudes marked a move towards male-female friendship as a more accepted social formation, he argues that it would take until the second wave of feminism (from the 1960s onwards) before it became anything like a 'widely accepted social possibility' (56). Writing a decade later in 1924 in the *Daily Mail*, one contributor, Beryl Sage, (who also wrote articles for the same paper about women's education) argued that while the public mind was 'singularly sceptical' about friendships between men and women, they could actually be the most successful form as a friendship of any kind required a balance of masculine and feminine elements (8). Criticising society for seeing the only legitimate male-female association as a bond of marriage, Sage suggested that cross-gender friendship was part of Nature's design: 'Nature, in her broad, serene way, sometimes picks out a man and woman and calls them friends, but society scoffs' (8). Here the separation of the abstract nouns 'Nature' and 'society' into separate clauses serves to highlight a rather Hardyian disparity between what might be held falsely as a societal ideal and what is a natural outcome of human existence and experience.

Hardy indirectly draws on the dangers of misreading societal expectation as reality in his depiction of a man and woman in the poem 'At an Inn': 'Veiled smiles bespoke their thought / Of what we were./ They warmed as they opined / Us more than friends –' (3-6) How the outside world perceives the dynamic between a man and a woman is shown to be at odds with their inner reality: 'As we seemed we were not' (33). As one of the seven or eight poems thought to have been written about Henniker, this text becomes another form of indirect communication through which Hardy is able to explore his feelings.<sup>39</sup> If read as a reference to the night they spent in Winchester, it is particularly poignant given that it appears to have been a moment when Henniker supposedly clarified her position as friend, rather than lover.

I argue that within private correspondence there was greater potential to carve out a platonic cross-gender relationship as a result of both the conventions of its textual form and its place within social and cultural practices. Since the late Middle Ages, epistolary friendships had existed between male and female monastics; Therefore, private correspondence already had the potential to offer one of the most fruitful ways of developing and maintaining a friendship with a member of the opposite sex. Nevertheless, the postal revolution of the nineteenth century also opened up greater possibilities for clandestine relations. Kate Thomas suggests that suspicions circulated about the postal service as a vehicle for sexually transgressive discourses and relationships (41). And yet, at the same time, I would argue that the letter's social form facilitated platonic interaction between married individuals because letter etiquette required

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<sup>39</sup> Evelyn Hardy and Pinion note that it is not certain that 'At an Inn' was about Henniker, only that he wrote the poem at the George Inn some time before 1898 (Pinion and Hardy xxxv).

inclusive address to the spouse, most usually as part of the concluding remark. Rather than being perceived as a threat to what Luftig refers to as the 'prevalent categories for gender relations'(3), for individuals such as Hardy it marked an exciting possibility to resolve his need for female companionship beyond the marital tie in a way that was morally secure. Henniker appears to have had a more positive, harmonious marriage than Hardy's but her husband's military profession meant he spent long periods away from home and, like Hardy, she had no living children. Absences in the familial home, along with an increasing sense of the cultural value of friendship, created conceptual spaces for deeper affections under the broad term of friendship itself.

### 3.2 The Language of Friendship

Luftig advises an approach in which 'friendship' is viewed as a 'complex fact of language: to give careful attention to the way it is named and negotiated in particular texts and to the discursive context in which those occasions are placed' (10). Letters are a fruitful place to undertake such an approach as they document use of terms in a historical context but without the public agenda of printed texts. If we accept that Hardy initially felt sexual desire toward Henniker, then his conscious employment of the language of friendship perhaps enabled him to successfully communicate with her as a platonic equal. When writing in July 1893, Hardy tentatively explores the construct of Henniker as 'friend' when he declares:

You seem like quite an old friend to me and I only hope Time will bear out the seeming. Indeed, but for an adverse stroke of fate, you would be — a friend of 13 years standing. (13 July 1893, *CL* 2: 22)

The dash after 'be' creates the impression of a pause, suggesting that what follows is a conscious reformulation; 'friend' replaces an alternative referential option, possibly 'wife'. For Hardy, the ironic twists of fate that feature in his fiction also seem to have born meaning in his own life. Illness had prevented Hardy from attending a gathering arranged by Henniker's father in 1880. Had he been well enough to go, he would have met Florence Milner, not Mrs Henniker, as she did not marry until 1882; something in the construction of his sentence seems to communicate thoughts of a missed opportunity. Nevertheless, by September 1893, after they had been corresponding for twelve weeks, Hardy was keen to reassure her that 'the one-sidedness I used to remind you of is disappearing' (10 September 1893, *CL* 2: 30). As Hardy refers to the one-sidedness as something he 'used to remind you of' it suggests that the frequency of their correspondence in the first few months facilitated a rapid development of their relationship. For Pinion, this one-sidedness refers to Hardy's uneasy relationship with the 'artificial world of London higher society' (23). This is supported by Hardy's use of the same term in a previous letter written in June 1893 in which he admits that he has 'entered on my scheme – the plan I spoke of' and then proceeds to document all of his social outings in London that week (29 June 1893, *CL* 2: 18). However, by using the fashionable colloquialism 'frivol' to describe the content of this letter, Hardy also highlights the superficial level he perhaps initially felt they must communicate on as friends of the opposite sex. The letters that follow are filled with details of social engagements – tea with Miss Milman, dinner with Lady Shrewsbury and lunch with the Jeunes. The tone is light and yet it seems forced, he is simply recording events in his social life as 'I said I would' (29 June 1893, *CL* 2: 18). In contrast to Pinion, in her own preface to the published letters, Evelyn Hardy interprets

'one sidedness' as a guarded reference to Hardy's unrequited attraction and directs us to his poems 'A Broken Appointment' and 'The Month's Calendar' to decode the sentiment. As, within the letters, both instances of the abstract notion of 'one-sidedness' are in close syntactical proximity to a reference to friendship, Evelyn Hardy's more personal reading is supported. After Hardy first draws attention to this imbalance he states: 'I sincerely hope to number you all my life among the most valued friends.' (5) When he later informs Henniker that the one-sidedness is disappearing, it is followed by the use of the pivotal conjunction 'but' in the qualifying statement: 'But you will always be among the most valued of my friends' (23). The conscious selection of the term 'friend' works to replace previous ideas of a lover and is a reminder of the social constraints required in correspondence with a married woman – Hardy positions Henniker as closely as he can within the realms of propriety. Conscious use of the language of friendship might well be said to have assisted Hardy's more gradual change in thought.

Such assertions of friendship become more frequent and more confident from this point on – most notably when Hardy chooses to address Henniker as 'my dear friend' from December 1893 onwards. The salutation 'my dear friend' appears as a convention of letter-writing of the period within cross-gender friendships, with Hardy also using this form of address for Lady St. Helier. However, whereas Lady St. Helier addressed Hardy as 'my dear uncle Tom' as an expression of closeness, what seems significant in the letters between Henniker and Hardy is that 'my dear friend' was adopted as a reciprocal term of

endearment between the two correspondents (Figure 17a; 17b), thus having an equalising effect.

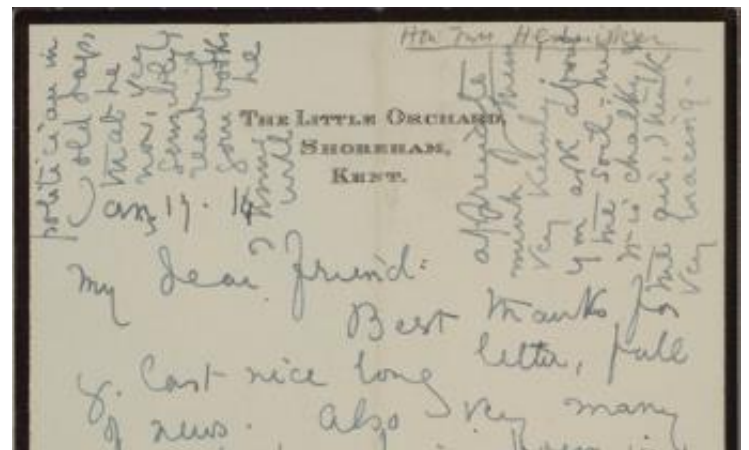
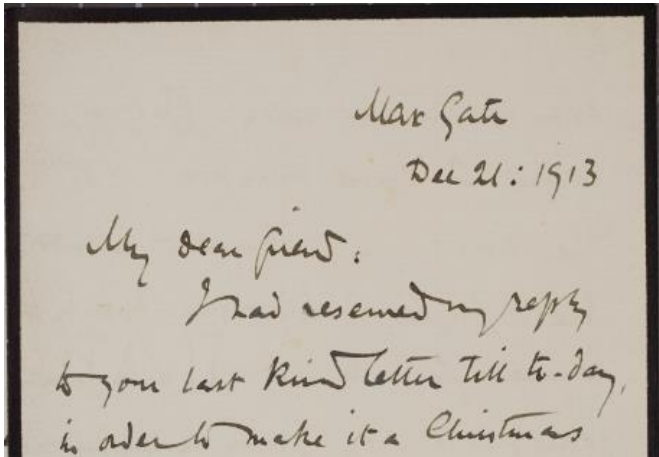


Figure 14a. Letter from Hardy to Henniker, 21 December 1913.

Figure 17b. Letter from Henniker to Hardy, 17 January 1914. Dorset County Museum archive.

Hardy also recognised that their connection was a stronger form of attachment than friendship as it was more conventionally seen. His letters suggest that in establishing this thought he searched the language for possible ways to define their relationship. For instance he uses the modified constructs of '*thorough* friends' and '*most valued*' friend to suggest a hierarchical concept of friendship. In one of the 1893 letters Hardy compares Henniker to another female friend, the American Rebekah Owen and consciously chooses to position Henniker closer by referring to her as 'a nearer friend – almost a sister' (13 September 1893, CL 2: 32). This not only draws on the platonic nature of their connection by this time but phrase 'nearer friend' again reveals the limits of language – the conventional noun 'friend' can only be partially modified to demonstrate an

additional layer of intimacy. Beyond this, terms have to be borrowed from other lexical sets, in this case 'sister', from the semantic field of family.

By the second stage of their friendship, Hardy settles on the distinction of Henniker as his 'best friend' (11 February 1914, *CL* 5: 10). The use of this phrase is particularly striking because it appears in the first letter after Hardy's marriage to Florence Dugdale in 1914, at a time when the term was being used more frequently in reference to spousal relations:

I wanted to tell you by letter before you could have learnt it from the papers that Florence Dugdale and I were married yesterday at Enfield. But somehow, although nobody seemed to know anything of it, the news was telephoned to London immediately. If I had foreseen this I would have written beforehand to you, my best friend. (11 February 1914, *CL* 5: 10)

In giving Henniker this title Hardy seems to have resolved something within himself; Henniker remains outside his marriage and yet closer than any other female friend. She no longer presents a challenge to spousal relations in the same way that she might have when he first met her.

Hardy read and was influenced by both John Stuart Mill and the French philosopher, Auguste Comte, both of whom advocated forms of platonic male-female friendship. In *System of Positive Polity*, Comte declared 'For perfect friendship, difference of sex is essential [...] No other voluntary tie can admit such full and unrestrained confidence' (189) and in *Autobiography* Mill makes reference to the life of the mind which would legitimately allow a man to maintain a long-standing friendship with a married woman. Letters present a conducive framework for heterosocial friendship, because, to borrow Mill's

phrase, they allow for 'mental intercourse' (Mill, *Autobiography* 113). Peel cites the social scientist Georg Simmel's essay 'The Metropolis and Mental Life' (1903) in which Simmel 'describes friendship as "inseparable from the immediacy of interaction" and lived through conversation, which maintained "the liveliness, the mutual understanding, the common consciousness" (175, qtd. in Peel 282). It had to be between equals and it 'also needed privacy' (Peel 282). Epistolary space provided the necessary privacy for friendships to flourish.

In the *Westminster Review*'s debate regarding 'Friendship Between the Sexes', which ran over three issues from June 1899 to November 1900, William Garland's response to Priscilla Moulder's original article supported the *concept* of male-female friendships but argued that few existed because women did not present themselves as the mental equals of men in conversation:

Once let girls show that without losing any of their modesty and self respect they can still have independent minds of their own " worthy thoughts and aspirations " men will be only too eager to pay homage to them as platonic friends. (331)

While Garland theoretically supported the New Woman 'who thinks and gives you the benefit of those thoughts', his restrictive views of women are revealed in his patronising tone and frequent use of the adjectives 'silly' and 'frivolous' to refer to female behaviour (330). He argues that most women are simply not capable of providing 'stimulus to higher thoughts' (331). Nevertheless, what emerges in his discussion of friendship, cross-gender or otherwise, is the importance of 'the interchange of thought and mental experience' — for Garland, this is what marks a person out as a true friend, not a 'mere acquaintance' (331). Within the private sphere of familiar correspondence, a



space existed for such mental interchange and this is evident when the letters of Hardy and Henniker are studied in dialogue.

According to the literary critic Sharon Marcus, physical distance was a necessary factor in achieving emotional intimacy in friendship at this time; by not sharing the same immediate space of the marital home, the connection that could exist between friends was less restrictive (69). The ability for epistolary communication to connect two minds across any degree of physical distance neatly encapsulates this emotional intimacy/distance equation.

For Hardy, there would always be barriers within this form of communication but in reaching this mental intimacy with Henniker, he seems to have enjoyed moments when postal coincidence created a physical manifestation of their intuitive bond, for instance when he writes in a letter dated 11 June 1914:

This morning...it flashed into my mind that I had been going to write to you for several days, and that I would do this very day: when lo, there was a letter from you. (*CL* 5: 29-30)

While this can just be enjoyed as a pleasurable happenstance, it also fits into a wider intellectual concern with the psychical. In an interview with William Archer in 1901, Hardy agreed with Archer that it was conceivable that 'the human brain may prove to be a more powerful transmitter and a more sensitive receiver than any invented by Marconi'. However, the real 'evidence' of an intuitive bond was in Hardy and Henniker's understanding of one another. When they were able to move beyond the superficial level of social conversation so evident in the early 1890s letters, their more established epistolary dialogue allowed them to

discuss matters evoking mutual compassion – namely animal rights and the inhumanity of war.

### 3.3 Collaborations and Influences

Hardy and Henniker were born after the introduction of the Penny Post in 1840 that resulted in a revolution in postal communication. In arguing for the uniform price of a penny per letter, the social reformer Sir Rowland Hill had suggested that cheap postage would accelerate ‘the religious, moral, and intellectual progress of the people’ because it would mean an ‘unobstructed circulation of letters’ (8). While he might have primarily been thinking of the equalising effect and advancement of individuals, in his published pamphlet *Post Office Reform* (1837) Hill imagines the postal system as part of the ongoing industrial revolution, in which he refers to the post office as ‘a powerful engine of civilisation, capable of performing a distinguished part in the great work of National education’ (8). Pauline Nestor (1985) has drawn attention to the liberating effect of this communication revolution on women but there has been less exploration of how regular correspondence connected men and women in a space that existed between the private and the public and facilitated co-operative discussion and activity between the two sexes.

Shared views on animal welfare and advocacy appear frequently in the correspondence between Hardy and Henniker. As Sylvia acknowledges in his paper ‘Florence Henniker, Hardy and the Anglo-Boer War Horses’: ‘To read the complete set of Hardy letters to Henniker is to see that their love of animals and

commitment to animal rights were defining elements of their friendship' (53). This demonstrates a second level of successful male-female collaboration – what Luftig termed a way of 'seeing together'. Peel observes how friendships 'between people joined together by cause, service and commitment rather than kinship' 'emphasised more clearly than anything else the fact that contact, conversation and amity could change hearts and minds' (288; 289).

Hardy's views on animal rights are clearly conveyed in *Life and Work* in which he states that:

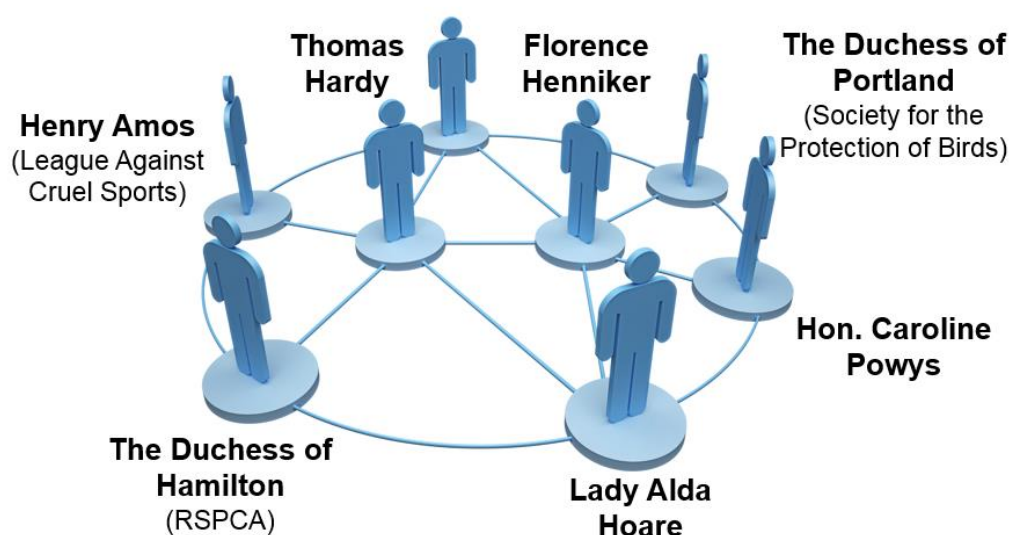
The discovery of the law of evolution, which revealed that all organic creatures are of one family shifted the centre of altruism from humanity to the whole conscious world collectively. (373-4)

This view was held by a growing number of people in the latter half of the nineteenth century and it is not surprising that Henniker, who Hardy described as a very 'intuitive' woman, held the same views on responsibilities towards animals.<sup>40</sup> As early as January 1894, Hardy wrote to Henniker to discuss 'the cruelties [...] perpetrated on animals by butchers, drovers, and cab-people' and expressed a wish that 'you and I could work together some day for the prevention of such barbarities' (15 Jan 1894, *CL* 2: 47). Later, in a letter written to Henniker in 1911 when the two friends were both affiliated with various animal charities, Hardy makes a passing reference to another platonic female friend, Lady Hoare of Stourhead, who he described as 'an unexpected ally in the Slaughter-houses reform work' (22 August 1911, *CL* 5: 168). Here, the unromantic, gender-neutral register employed by Hardy is significant. More

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<sup>40</sup> As part of the impact and outreach work for this project, an educational resource has been created for GCSE students to explore attitudes to animals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Letters from Hardy and Henniker have been included, alongside articles from the *Graphic*. See Appendix B.

closely associated with global politics and warfare, the noun ‘ally’ reinforces the co-operative equality of men and women working to effect a change in this field. Hardy became a point of connection between Hoare and Henniker, and networks of communication can be plotted between Hardy, Henniker, Lady Hoare, Laurence Pike, members of the RSPCA including the Duchess of Hamilton, Caroline Powys and the founder of the League Against Cruel Sports, Henry Amos, among others.<sup>41</sup>



**Fig. 18. Infographic of a correspondence network**

What the network diagram highlights is the wide range of animal welfare issues that were taken up by different people. The Duchess of Hamilton was primarily concerned with slaughterhouse reform and the abolition of vivisection, while

<sup>41</sup> Understanding of these networks will be enhanced by the digital platform on which these letters will be able to be viewed as open linked data will allow links to be made across letter collections.

Caroline Powys was focused on the 'murderous millinery'<sup>42</sup> of the 1890s and early twentieth century. Hardy emerges as a central point of connection between the issues and the people. In creating a visualisation of this network, it somewhat mirrors the aims of Henry Salt in 1891 when he set up the Humanitarian League and worked with a small group of advocates to draw up a manifesto that would unite all groups which sought to humanise public opinion. In identifying the disjunct between societies such as the RSPCA, the anti-war and vegetarian groups, the Humanitarian League worked as an umbrella organisation to emphasise the 'single bond of fellowship and universal sympathy' that ran through them all (4). Correspondence between Nina Hamilton, the Duchess of Hamilton, and Hardy reveals productive relationships between men and women who shared a common cause. Hamilton first wrote to Hardy in 1922 to ask him to support her work in slaughterhouse reform. As Hardy had previously written to the editor of *Animal's Friend* to suggest the pig-killing scene from *Jude* was used to encourage reform, clearly this was a fruitful point of connection (Hamilton may have even seen and been prompted by this article as she subscribed to the publication). In asking Hardy to 'write a few lines in The Times', Hamilton hoped to engender change at a time when 'the Country is I think really beginning to wake up to the need for reform from every point of view'. This is what Luftig refers to as the concept of 'seeing together' — shared ideals formulating into action so that a new world vision could result in social change. As Hamilton went on to write, 'I do so feel that if sufficient influence is brought to bear on/in the Press now we shall accomplish legislative Reform' (3 July 1922).

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<sup>42</sup> This was a term that appeared in the press in the 1890s.

While individual legislative reforms might have been frustrated at numerous points, the friendship of men and women united in the cause of animal welfare did result in the passing of the Cruelty to Animals Act in 1876 and this was a significant building block in the foundation of further social change.

Florence Henniker also actively involved herself as a committee member on a number of charities, including the RSPCA and the Animals' Institute. As such, she can be placed alongside a number of women who actively campaigned for the protection of animals at this time, including Hardy's first wife, Emma Gifford who wrote several periodical articles arguing for better care and treatment for domestic animals. Lyle Munro (2001) notes that the number of women actively involved in animal advocacy campaigns during the long nineteenth century significantly outweighed those of their male counterparts, although it was the men who held the leading roles. However, within the letters of Hardy and Henniker, the animal protection movement emerges as a place of co-operative action in which the pair worked on an equal level, and this can be seen as representative of gender relations within the various factions of the movement as a whole because of the focus on kinship. In a letter from Henry Amos to Hardy of August 1926, this levelling effect can be seen in the assertion that:

The whole district, from the Vicar, leading Councillor, and most prominent women to the poorest person is against the disgraceful act of the Hunt driving a stag over the cliffs to instant death. (24 August 1926)

Peel examines how friendships that emerged through social causes helped to break down barriers of race and class (288).

The correspondence between Amos and Hardy also reveals the importance of Hardy's global status, which was firmly established by the 1920s. Amos asserts that:

You, more than anyone, can say a word that will lift the whole subject [of hunting and cruel sports] into public consideration. I hope it may be my privilege to help give wings to such a message. (24 August 1926)

However, for Hardy, literature would always be a more powerful method of raising a social issue and effecting change through empathic identification — protests alone would not change what he saw as 'human savagery'. This comes through in his replies to Amos (some dictated to his secretary, May O'Rourke) in which Hardy regrets that:

In reply to your letter I can only say that I do not see that much can be done to hinder cruel sports while an appetite for cruelty is cultivated in the young. (16 November 1925)

You have all my sympathies in protesting against cruel sports; but I fear that the human race has changed so little as yet from a state of savagery that not much can be done. (14 October 1926)

The [...] human race being still practically barbarian, it does not seem likely that men's delight in cruel sports can be lessened except by other degrees. To attempt even this is, however, a worthy object which he commends. (25 February 1927)<sup>43</sup>

Henry Amos was more hopeful that protest could lead to legislative change and this demonstrates how letters provided a platform for discussion of ideas that existed between the private and the public; Hardy could share his concerns with

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<sup>43</sup> Quotations are taken from Hardy's pencil draft replies recorded on incoming letters.

Amos while still publicly supporting and lending his name to the charity. Letters also facilitated the circulation of more provocative campaign material across social networks as various enclosures could be included within an envelope for no additional postal costs. For instance, Amos wrote in November 1925, ‘forgive me inflicting the enclosed pictures upon you but they show the standard & the spirit our Leagues has to fight’ (16 November 1925).

Henniker also used her fiction as a means of drawing attention to the plight of animals, which Sylvia notes in his re-reading of her work. However, he glosses over the significant impact of her short story collection *Contrasts* (1903) in raising awareness of animal suffering by simply stating that ‘four of the sixteen stories include animals’ (‘Florence Henniker’ 54). When she published the stories in 1903 one reviewer in *The Spectator* commented specifically on ‘The Butterfly’ and ‘A Brand of Discord’ as the saddest stories in the collection, ‘written with a most poignant art, and cause a sort of rage in the reader at the useless suffering which exists in the world’ (23). In ‘A Brand of Discord’, Henniker describes the nervous reaction of the protagonist, Lady Wokingham whenever a telegram is brought in on a silver tray as it triggered a memory of receiving the news of the supposed death of her husband via this medium. The reader only understands the contents of the telegram when the narrator states that Lady Wokingham saw the incident:

in her mind’s eye – everything that had happened a few hours ago in that Yorkshire ploughed field, under the murky November sky. The tall, straggling brown hedge, the broad blind ditch with its heaped-up bed of decaying leaves, the gallant horse lying with its broken back beside it, the motionless scarlet-covered figure. Then down the street came the hoarse voices of the men selling evening papers. “Special! Special! Terrible haccident on the Brighton line – special! Sudden death of a peer in the ‘unting-field! Special!” (64)



While the end focus of this image is on the human figure lying 'motionless', the descriptive detail of the horse precedes concern for the human. Not only is the horse pre-modified with the positive evaluative 'gallant' but the detail of its 'broken back' demands the reader's empathy and makes for an uncomfortable visualisation, much as in Hardy's depiction of the sheep driven over the cliff in *Far From the Madding Crowd*. The focus on the unnecessary death of a horse might also be said to echo the scene in Hardy's *Tess* where an accident on the road results in the death of the family's only work animal. Earlier the reader is told that Lord Wokingham had been away on a hunting trip and the reference to his 'scarlet-covered figure' reminds the reader that hunting is the reason for the deaths of both animal and man. Later Molly, and the reader, learn that the telegram message was inaccurate, her husband was only injured. While there is a sense of relief at this reprieve, the reader is also reminded that the horse certainly did die in the accident. What is also of interest here is that Henniker, like Hardy, depicts written communication as misleading and prone to failure. The haste to send a telegram before the newspapers reported the accident meant that the wrong information was conveyed. However, the incident in this short story also highlights a contrast between private and public means of written communication. The telegram, part of the communication revolution, is faster and enables an aristocratic lady a few moments of private grief and contemplation before the cries of the newsboys disrupt her thought and breaks the internal focus for the reader as well. Hardy had already read this particular short story several years earlier, in 1896, congratulating Henniker for getting it published in a periodical in a letter of June 1896 and commenting that 'the title is rather good' (1 June 1896, *CL* 2: 122). When the full collection was printed Henniker sent Hardy a copy as a gift and he replied two months later:

I would not write to thank you for your kind gift of *Contrasts* – a quite unexpected pleasure – till I had read it, and digested it. I was not aware that you meant to publish it so soon. Several of the stories I was familiar with, having read them when they were printed in periodicals.

The tale I like best, and the one I think the best in point of art, is 'In a Rhineland Valley'. This is a charming story, in which just enough is told, and just enough happens to create an abiding impression. It develops, too, on the lines of character entirely, owing nothing to the 'deus ex machina' that helps our lower forms of narrative art. (29 March 1903, *CL* 3: 57)

'In a Rhineland Valley' also makes subtle references to animal suffering, including the opening which draws the reader's attention to the cracking of a whip to make two horses move faster and later another reference to the whip of an ox-cart. Hunting is more prominent here, as one of the characters, Professor Semmler, is described as being 'full of glee if he returned home from the chase with one hare and a jay or two' (78). A distinction is made between men who hunt purely for sport and those who eat their kills and in so doing Henniker, through the words of one of her other characters, highlights the matter of 'unnecessary sportsmen' (78). Both Hardy and Henniker opposed hunting, and Henniker's phrase in her fiction in some ways echoes Henry Salt and Henry Amos's term 'cruel sports' which was used by the Humanitarian League to encompass all forms of hunting of animals, along with other forms of mistreatment for competition, such as bear baiting and cock-fighting. As part of an ongoing correspondence with Henry Salt between 1901 and 1910, Hardy wrote a passionate letter against all forms of such sport, which Salt later read out at an annual League meeting:

My views on sport in general being what are called extreme – that is, I hold it to be, in any case, immoral and unmanly to cultivate a pleasure in compassing the death of our weaker and simpler fellow-creatures by cunning, instead of learning to regard their destruction, if a necessity, as an odious task, akin to that, say, of the common hangman. (27 June 1901, pencil draft reply)

The careful wording of 'fellow creatures' is something that was prominent in much of the Humanitarian League literature and shows again this merging of communication in the private and public realms.

Vivisection was another animal welfare issue which united – and divided – various factions of society, pitting medical practitioners and students against suffragettes, trade unionists, Marxists and liberals. Significantly, more women were held prominent leadership positions in this division of the animal rights movement. The Irish feminist, Frances Power Cobbe founding the National Anti-Vivisection Society (NAVS) in 1875 and the campaign gained momentum from this point onwards. Nevertheless, Bynum suggests that antivivisectionist campaigners never reached more than a few thousand at the end of the nineteenth century because many were either unaware of the ways in which certain medical knowledge was gained through live animal experimentation, or possibly unconcerned. However, the issue was brought fully into public consciousness through the Brown Dog Affair of 1903 which saw riots across Battersea for almost seven years after the initial controversy. In 1903 William Bayliss, a member of the Department of Physiology at University College London, was accused of performing an illegal vivisection in which a brown terrier was used as part of a medical experiment in front of sixty students without being adequately anaesthetized. The incident might have gone by without notice if it weren't for two members of the audience, Lizzy Lind of Hageby and Leisa Katherine Schartau, who were Swedish feminists and antivivisection activists. Enrolled as medical students at the London School of Medicine for Women, which was a vivisection-free college, Hageby and

Schartau documented the experiment in their diaries in order to make such cruelties publicly known:

One would certainly have expected that cardiac and respiratory factors, in a living organism, would always be of considerable importance, and for practical purposes one has generally acted on that assumption, even before Science came to assure us of the fact. One wonders if the practice of vivisection brings not only a blunting of the sentiments of pity and justice, but also an entire atrophy of the sense of the ridiculous. Certainly, under the most severe stimulus, these particular centres, in the majority of vivisectors, refuse to respond

medical students rush up to the dog and begin to squeeze its chest repeatedly, just as they had seen the demonstrator do. We stop to look at the animal before we leave. The right side of the head is quite flayed; the blood has clotted on the board under his mangled neck. We feel wonderfully calm and happy, but our eyes are wet, and there is something like a prayer in our hearts for the welfare of the little prisoner that has escaped. . . .

**Fig. 19. *The Shambles of Science: Extracts from the Diary of Two Students of Physiology* (1903: 38, 46)**

In these two extracts from the published diaries, Hageby and Schartau's discourse consistently highlights the cruelty of vivisection, foregrounding this above any advances to medical knowledge, for instance in the point made that vivisection requires 'a blunting of the sentiments of pity and justice' (two key elements of humanity), the deliberately graphic description of the dead animal at the end and the choice of the phrase 'little prisoner' to remind the reader that animals used for experimentation are no different to humans who are falsely imprisoned and inhumanely treated.

If their first act was to record the events of the experiment in their diary, the second action of the two Swedish anti-vivisectionists was to show the full document to the secretary of the National Anti-Vivisection Society, Stephen Coleridge, who was not only a barrister but also son of a former Lord Chief

Justice of England, and great-grandson of the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Knowing that the 1876 Cruelty to Animals Act forbade any animal to be used in more than one experiment, he identified that the scientists had acted unlawfully as the brown dog had been used three times before being killed at the end of this experiment. However, before seeking prosecution, Coleridge decided to deliver a powerfully emotive speech at the annual meeting of NAVS on 1 May 1903 in which he exclaimed: 'If this is not torture, let Mr. Bayliss and his friends [...] tell us in Heaven's name what torture is'(10).<sup>44</sup> The meeting was attended by over two thousand people and written support was given from Hardy and fellow writers Jerome K. Jerome and Rudyard Kipling in their absence. The next day the radical paper *Daily News* reported the account, resulting in public outrage and hurried discussion in the House of Commons. In sharing their diaries with Stephen Coleridge, Hageby and Schartau achieved a significant instance of male-female collaboration. The way in which their diaries were re-reported in the form of his speech and the follow-up news article is also another example of private communication being brought into public discourse creating overlap and a blurring of the two spheres.

Although in many ways not a radical, Henniker's language in her letters to Hardy reveals a conscious positioning of herself in relation to the female radical associated with social change. In a letter in June 1914 Henniker refers to the opening of the new physiological laboratories in Cambridge and expresses the wish that 'some mad woman wd burn down that place' (Figure 20).

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<sup>44</sup> As quoted in Peter Mason's *The Brown Dog Affair*, Two Sevens Publishing (1997).

H. 3178

I am disgusted with Prince  
 a-d Connaught for opening  
 the new physiological Laboratory  
 at Cambridge, & going out  
 of his way to identify himself  
 with the worst type of  
 vivisection. — I only wish some  
 mad woman w<sup>d</sup> burn down  
 that place! It is awful to  
 think of all those "private  
 research rooms". —

I hope you are getting fond of  
 "Wessex?" Please ask Florence  
 to write to me some day —  
 & tell me all of news — my  
 best love to her.

Yr aff. friend  
 FH

Fig. 20. Letter from Florence Henniker to Hardy (10 June 1914: 4). Dorset County Museum archive, H.3178.

In this moment of unguarded expression she seems to wish for more radical action than a woman of her social position could exercise. The reference to 'some mad woman' evokes the construct of female madness that had emerged during the nineteenth century and subsequently evinced for example in the more direct methods of action employed by the Suffragettes. While the impersonal though striking phrase 'some mad woman' created some distance from the imagined perpetrator, there was clearly something appealing about the construct. Henniker had previously met with frustration and disappointment when she tried to campaign for better care of the horses used within the Boer War via written petition and complaint. Nearly 500,000 horses and donkeys were shipped to the battlefield but up to 400,000 were lost during the campaign – largely due to lack of food, rest and general neglect. Richard Sylvia has identified several reply letters (held in the Suffolk County Record Office at Ipswich), that indicate that Henniker had appealed to the government, on behalf of the RSPCA, for a special corps of veterinary surgeons to be deported to care for sick horses and humanely destroy those beyond treatment.<sup>45</sup> What is most striking in the letters Henniker received from the War Office is their persistent denial of the problem. For instance Sir Evelyn Wood wrote on 15 November 1899 that veterinary surgeons already stationed in South Africa would do all they could to 'minimize the sufferings of the horses and mules in the war' (qtd. in Sylvia 'Florence Henniker' 55) and other letters refer to the impracticality of

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<sup>45</sup> For more information about Henniker's involvement in this campaign see Richard Sylvia's paper 'Florence Henniker, Hardy and the Anglo-Boer War Horses'. *Hardy Society Review*. 7.2 (2011): 51-68.

her suggestion, refuse to trouble those in high command, and reassure her that a soldier would always shoot his horse if too badly wounded.<sup>46</sup>

Henniker's letters to the government were written alongside private discussion with Hardy, revealed in his letters of 11 October 1899 and 15 February 1901, in which he refers to the philosophical concept of the Immanent Will which he fully explored in *The Dynasts*:

Please let me know what news you have had from S. Africa, and if anything to cause you anxiety. As to your hope that the horses and mules will receive compensation somewhere for their sufferings, I, too, hope the same, though according to modern philosophies they, like ourselves, will pass into nothing, and have to be *re-willed* into existence as other horses and mules before they have the chance of such compensation. (11 October 1899, *CL* 2: 280)

While Hardy and Henniker were in strong agreement over the mistreatment of horses in war, on the issue of vivisection there was greater disparity in their views. Evelyn Hardy argues that the pair were united in their 'common interests, literary and compassionate, chief among the latter their hatred of vivisection' (xxii). However, the correspondence shows that Hardy was often ambivalent. After Henniker commented on the new Cambridge laboratories, Hardy's reply appears more restrained on the matter:

I, too, have felt uneasy about that physiological laboratory. But I suppose one must take the words of the vivisectors as honest when they assure us that they never torture animals. (11 June 1914, *CL* 5: 30)

The tone of his letter expresses a reluctance to take 'the words of the vivisectors as honest' but other correspondence within the collection reveals

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<sup>46</sup> Unpublished letters addressed to Florence Henniker and held at the Ipswich branch of the Suffolk County Record Office are quoted here with permission of Mary, Duchess of Roxburghe, who holds the copyright thereto.



that Hardy was conflicted on the issue of vivisection. When the Duchess of Hamilton, the President of the Animal Defence & Anti-Vivisection Society wrote to ask Hardy to take on the role of Vice President in November 1923, Hardy's pencil draft reply on the original letter reads as follows:

Shd be delighted if it does not commit me to absolute anti-vivisection...Maybe cases in wh. A very small amount of suffering, such as a human being wd. Submit to – may lead to enlightenment on some point of great value in relieving the future suffering both of men & animals themselves so I don't know what to say. Pps you cd suggest say (?) title "Animal Defence & ?" soc!! Or A.Defence Soc. alone & I wd join... (11 June 1914)

This is the draft version of Hardy's reply which he recorded in pencil on the back of Hamilton's letter. It shows clearly that he was keen to weigh up the benefits of medical experimentation alongside animal advocacy. In subsequent correspondence it is clear that what he agreed with Hamilton was that cruel uses and abuses of animals were a 'betrayal of friendship – & all that friendship means' (Hamilton, 22 January 1924). That Hardy extended his construct of friendship to also mean a bond between humans and animals is something that comes through in his anecdotes and comments about his own pets, both in his dialogue with Henniker and in *Life and Work*, as well as through his fiction. One of the most well-known instances of this is in *Jude*; as a young boy, the protagonist sees a 'common thread of fellow feeling' with the rooks on the farm, his 'only friends' (23). Within this context, his comments to Henniker about vivisectors reveal a despondent tone in which the world is a 'bungled institution' and vivisection just one of the many harmful outcomes of such a system: 'Altogether the world is such a bungled institution from a humane point of view that a grief more or less hardly counts' (11 June 1914, *CL* 5: 30).

While Hardy's outlook here appears as pessimism, he then consciously comments on his 'hope of much amelioration.' In a rare interview with William Archer in 1901 Hardy explained:

"[P]eople call me a pessimist; and if it is pessimism to think, with Sophocles, that 'not to have been born is best,' then I do not reject the designation [...] But my pessimism, if pessimism it be, does not involve the assumption that the world is going to the dogs [...] On the contrary my practical philosophy is distinctly meliorist. What are my books but one plea against 'man's inhumanity to man' – to woman – and to the lower animals? [...] Whatever may be the inherent good or evil of life, it is certain that men make it much worse than it need be." (531 qtd. in Millgate 379)

Given the criticisms that were levelled at Hardy for his supposedly pessimistic views, he was aware, even in private correspondence, of the dangers of being misread. Nevertheless, the sustained familiarity with a regular correspondent such as Henniker, allowed honest, unpolished opinions to be aired within a safe context. In 1894 Hardy had expressed a wish for 'a friend with whom mutual confessions can be made of weaknesses without fear of reproach or contempt' (15 January 1894, *CL* 2: 48). In Henniker it seems he found such a person.

Equally, Henniker could imagine violent protests without misrepresenting herself as an extremist in her letters to Hardy. Despite wishing that a more radical woman than herself could take action, Henniker's letters suggest that she did believe in the power of the written word to engender change. Both Hardy and Henniker published open letters in the periodical press to galvanise support for various animal causes. To garner support for the Society for the Protection of Birds, Henniker wrote to the editor of *Home and Hearth* in 1897 (Figure 21). Entitled 'The Destruction of Birds', this open letter condemns the use of exotic

bird feathers within fashion and then proceeds to quote another letter, written by Caroline Powys, daughter of Lord Lilford and active member of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). The passionate rhetoric of Miss Powys' letter, in which she hopes that the woman who wears feathers will be 'shaken out of her barbarity by an attack upon her taste' (110), uses the language of animal cruelty and directs it instead onto the female in question. Given the time at which it was written, it is perhaps not surprising that it still reinforced separate gendered spheres: 'No woman, however featherheaded in the literal or metaphorical sense of the word, would care to face a disapproving male world' (110). However, the inclusion of the home addresses of both ladies encourages more intimate communication with possible supporters recruited from the *Hearth and Home* readership and at these meetings another space was created where men and women participated in meaningful heterosocial conversation.

CORRESPONDENCE.  
THE DESTRUCTION OF BIRDS.  
*To the Editor of HEARTH AND HOME.*

SIR.—Will you kindly find space for a few extracts from a letter which I have received from Miss Powys, daughter of the celebrated authority on birds, the late Lord Lilford. I most cordially endorse every word, and find myself at a loss to understand how women with a spark of imagination, or a sense of compassion, can continue to wear egret plumes or small birds as ornaments, if they once know of the suffering entailed upon these beautiful creatures in procuring them.

Miss Powys writes:—"Bird trimming has been largely worn since November. The confiding little robin redbreast has been slaughtered by dozens for the disfigurement of ball-dresses. 'Wait a day or two and you can have as many robins as you want,' was said to a dressmaker, who was making enquiries as to the truth of this statement, on behalf of a merciful woman. Owls are being pushed now, brown owls on toques, white owl's feathers on white evening dresses. This monstrosity will not last; but we whose hearts are wrung by the destruction of rare foreign birds at the breeding season, ask each other how they are to be protected from the recurrent brutalities inflicted on them by women? Must she be told in vain of how the herons are being exterminated on the swamps of Florida and

Mexico at the breeding season for the sake of the 'osprey' that waves on her hat or bonnet, the young birds being consequently left to die of slow starvation? Perhaps the only hope for the birds is in the education of young mankind. No woman, however feather-headed, in the literal or metaphorical sense of the word, would care to face a disapproving male world, and the herons would bring up their young in peace far away in Central America. And who knows? Shaken out of barbarity by an attack upon her taste, the thoughtless woman may become the happy prey of a tenderer assault—the inroad of a merciful sentiment for ever dominating her vanity."

I hope that these words of Miss Powys may meet with sympathy from your readers, and that many may be induced to become members of the Society for the Protection of Birds, of which the Duchess of Portland is president, and of which the Hon. Caroline Powys, 33, Montagu Square, W., will give them all particulars.

Faithfully yours,

FLORENCE HENNIKER.

39, Sloane Gardens, S.W.

Fig. 21. 'The Destruction of Birds.' To the Editor of *Hearth and Home*.

27 May 1897: 110.

The collaborative approach taken by Hardy and Henniker echoed an important element of his previous relationship with his first wife, Emma Gifford. Writing to Henniker in 1912, after Emma's death, he asserts:

I think I have told you before that her [Emma's] courage in the cause of animals was truly admirable, surpassing that of any other woman I have ever known...In town or country she would, when quite alone among the roughest characters, beard any man ill-using an animal and amaze him into a shamefaced desistance [...] (17 December 1912, *CL* 4: 243-244)

Here Hardy deliberately gives the highest praise to Emma, placing her at the centre of the letter in stating that her actions in the name of animal welfare surpassed 'that of any other woman' and by bringing her so vividly into the letter Hardy creates a conceptual space in which wife and friend exist together though perhaps a little uneasily. However, by the point of his second marriage, Hardy seems to have understood that there was emotional space for various intimate social bonds with women:

I wonder if it will surprise you when I say that according to my own experience a second marriage does not, or need not, obliterate an old affection, though it is generally assumed that the first woman is entirely forgotten in such cases. (6 March 1914, *CL* 5: 19)

While the direct reference in this passage is to his ongoing love for Emma, the use of the more imprecise phrase 'an old affection' could be said to encompass his feelings for Henniker and was therefore perhaps a guarded form of reassurance that *their* bond would not be disrupted by re-marriage. The affection and friendship that already existed between Florence Dugdale and Florence Henniker may have been a factor in Hardy's ability to assure this. Henniker had introduced Miss Dugdale to the Hardys in 1904 and the existing

bond between the two Florences seems to have been a positive element that prevented Hardy viewing them as rivals to his affection.

Writing to Florence Hardy in 1928, J.M. Barrie surmised that Henniker's correspondence had not directly influenced Hardy's work (Meynell 153). However, it seems significant that at the same time that Hardy was writing about the concept of cross-gender friendships in *Jude*, he was also coming to understand his own experience of this through his ongoing correspondence with Henniker. Their epistolary communication from the 1900s shows that a platonic friendship was achieved but it was a more intimate construct than conventional definitions could accommodate. This then echoes the potential for friendship between men and women that Sue searches for in *Jude*, part of what Hardy refers to as the 'wide field of strong attachment' (201). Jude's internal reflections that, if 'he could only get over her sex, as she seemed to be able to do so easily of his, what a comrade she would make' (184) echoes the difficulties that Hardy had to overcome in order to establish a genuine friendship with Florence Henniker. This has led to a number of critics (e.g. Robert Gittings (1978), William Deresiewicz (2007) ) acknowledging that Sue is, at least in part, inspired by Henniker. Certainly the line: 'She was nearer to him than any other woman he had ever met' (Hardy, *Jude* 184) mirrors Hardy's 1893 letter when he positioned Henniker as a 'nearer friend – almost a sister' (13 September 1893, CL 2: 32). Luftig suggests that:

Jude the Obscure demonstrates how even the most sustained treatments of "friendship" may, while claiming to authenticate it, ultimately betray it. Hardy could fantasize for himself a [...] temporary, private escape, and in the process depict and even enact heterosexual cooperation. But if he couldn't have it all his way, the deal was off: he was would mark friendship a silent thing doomed. (119)

I challenge Luftig's evaluation, as it is a reading of *Jude* that cannot be used to speak of Hardy's own experiences. While Hardy's fiction stopped in the 1890s, his friendship with Henniker went well beyond this into the 1920s and the letters provide us with further insight into what Hardy imagined. In 'seeing together' through the war years and the 1920s, Hardy and Henniker could appreciate the reality of a fruitful friendship that exists only as an ideal in *Jude*: 'for their difference of opinion on conjectural subjects only drew them closer together on matters of daily human experience' (III.–iv 184).

Through the war years, 'matters of daily human experience' become more pronounced in the letters of Hardy and Henniker. In 1917, Hardy wrote:

We are living uneventful lives here (if the news of war events are not reckoned) [...] The actual reminder in this house that the struggle is going on is that I have some German prisoners at work in the garden, cutting down some trees, and clearing the ground for more potato-room. They are amicable young fellows, and it does fill one with indignation that thousands of such are led to slaughter by the ambitions of Courts and Dynasties. If only there were no monarchies in the world, what a chance for amelioration! (4 March 1917)

Henniker replied the next day to pick up this thread of their conversation:

I can so understand your feeling about your German prisoners. Anna thinks you will write a poem about them? How curious it would be if any relation of hers were among them. Yesterday a friend of hers, – from the same Rhine-land village, came to see her – an intelligent, oldish woman who was quite as severe about the German Government as you could be. She is a person of emancipated views, and wants to see a Republic in Germany. She said how changed for the worse the younger people in her country now are. (5 March 1917)

Anna Hirschmann was Henniker's German maid and companion. In 1915

Henniker had been forced to make an application to the Home Office to ensure

Hirschmann could continue living in England. In another act of collaboration, Henniker called on Hardy to write a supporting statement:

I know you will help me & my dear beautiful old Anna – will you very kindly say that you have known Anna Hirschmann for a considerable time & that you believe her to be a most devoted, honest, loyal person (or any words you like to use?) who may safely be allowed to remain in England. I want to attach your testimonial to a form that has to go to the Home Office, to enable her to stay with me.

She is not strong, & it w[oul]d simply break her heart to leave me. Your name w[oul]d be a help to her & to me. (23 May 1915)

Henniker only rarely drew on the fame of her friend but in this moment she could not deny the power of Hardy's name. What they both valued were moments when aspects of commonality between the British and German people could be promoted in the public sphere. In particular, Henniker appreciated Hardy's poem 'The Pity of It' (1915) but Hardy was frustrated that others did not understand his intentions, writing that '[p]eople are in strangely irritable moods I fancy. I said very harmlessly [...] that the Germans were a "kin folk, kin tongued" (which is indisputable) and letters attacking me appeared, denying it. The fact of their being our enemies does not alter their race' (20 May 1917, *CL* 5: 215).

Peel notes that friendships offered 'protection against the worst aspects of urban modernity' (279) and in their shared experience of war-time Britain, Hardy and Henniker's relationship was strengthened.



### 3.4 Beyond phantom selves

Hardy's short story 'An Imaginative Woman' is another text which has often been connected to Henniker. Michal Peled Ginsburg, for example, suggests that 'although and Imaginative Woman is based on an earlier sketch, the story as it stands owes something to Hardy's involvement with the Hon. Mrs Florence Henniker during the early 1890s' (86). In a classic Hardyan narrative built on missed opportunities, this short story explores the existence of Derrida's 'phantom-selves' in epistolary texts.<sup>47</sup> When writing to a poet she admires, Ella uses the male pseudonym 'John Ivy' and the recipient, Robert Trewe believes he is communicating with a fellow male poet. Ironically, Ella later learns (when reading his suicide note) that it was her very femininity that Trewe needed. Therefore, although it would not have been socially acceptable for a married woman to write directly to a bachelor, the text implies a need to transgress boundaries of etiquette. Had Ella written to Trewe as herself, they might well have had a deeper connection, one that both were craving. Hardy shows the reader that Ella probably knew this at the moment of epistolary creation: 'were he only to see her matters would be otherwise' (25). While this can be understood as a desire for a physical meeting, as opposed to correspondence, it also implies that Ella needed to write her real self into the text – not a phantom construct.

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<sup>47</sup> For a more detailed exploration of Derrida in relation to Hardy's use written communication in his fiction see Galia Benziman's 'Thrust Beneath the Carpet: Hardy and the Failure of Writing.' *Studies in the Novel*. 45.2 (2013): 198-213.

Similarly, both Hardy and Henniker had to shape, negotiate and re-negotiate their constructed selves within early correspondence in order to establish a genuine friendship. In an early letter to Henniker, Hardy explicitly refers to the emancipated female he sought but failed to find in the literary women who entered his life. Hardy had to let go of the phantom self, a constructed identity of Henniker which was built on an ideal of an emancipated female. In one of the poems inspired by Henniker, 'Wessex Heights' (1896) the act of letting go of a phantom is explored in the line 'I can let her go'. Writing to J.M. Barrie after Hardy's death, Florence Hardy highlighted a distinction between the poetic construct who loved and desired Henniker as an emancipated woman but had to let go of the ideal, and Hardy who in reality retained a long friendship with Henniker. Through continued correspondence Hardy came to see and to write to the real Henniker. Rather than phantom selves, versions of the self that emerge in correspondence are liminal selves because they occupy a position at the boundaries of the private and the public.

Writing also becomes an important way of achieving mental proximity in 'An Imaginative Woman'. Ella reads the poet's scribbblings hidden behind the wallpaper which conveys a sense of mental intimacy and by tracing her fingers across the pen marks, Ella feels even closer to Trewe's 'inner self' (Ginsburg 128): 'she knew his thoughts and feelings as well as she knew her own.' For Ginsburg, this is Hardy's way of 'providing us with a model for thinking of the creative imagination in a way that avoids traditional gender stereotypes' (128); one of a number of intimate permutations of a male-female bond that does not

exist as a result of sex. The mental proximity achieved when two people regularly correspond with one another is another permutation which I argue Hardy came increasingly to value.

In its most developed form, Hardy and Henniker's friendship was perhaps the strongest form of male-female attachment outside of marriage and its uplifting effect on Hardy has been acknowledged by Hardy scholars. On the importance of friendship more generally, Marcus writes:

One reason friendship had such allure for Victorians was its unique position as a form of love perceived as moral, uplifting and genuine even though – or because – it entailed few of the material entanglements and responsibilities attached to middle-class family life. In its concentration of pure sentiment, friendship became a luxury good that expressed freedom from instrumental relationships. (69)

At a time when self-development was an important ideal, friends were regarded as a form of moral guidance. The exchange of letters was part of the ritualising of friendship, but beyond the act itself, the content of intimate correspondence provided a means of self-development and ethical development with its capacity and propensity to bring out feelings of altruism and the desire for self-improvement.

Hardy and Henniker's ability to foster meaningful connections with various male and female correspondents reveals the way in which an extended network of cross-gender friendships existed via letter exchanges, indicating the extent to which social and political discussion was operating within this private medium. In *On Liberty* (1859) J.S. Mill had advocated the power of free, uninhibited

discussion to bring about social change. Friendship maintained through regular correspondence provided the desired conditions. In examining the theme of 'liberty of discussion' in the fiction of Mona Caird ('Liberating Conversations' 873), Demelza Hookway draws upon Mill's philosophy to demonstrate that when 'bounded by convention and superficiality' conversation is stultifying but when individuals pair off there is the potential for 'productive intensity of unreserved conversation' (874). To some extent this mirrors the way in which epistolary communication between Hardy and Henniker evolved from the early stages when Hardy restricted himself to 'mere frivol' to the more liberating points of discussion that are evident in later correspondence.

This chapter has sought to show how the nature of the letter form allows both participants to set agendas and steer narrative threads as the multi-vocality of the form encourages equality between participants. Moreover, the language of friendship could be drawn on directly within the conventions of letter-writing and the mental proximity of correspondents creates a space in which more intimate permutations of heterosocial relations could emerge.

#### 4. Hardy's correspondence with younger writers

In *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), E M Forster declared that 'Hardy is my home' (93). This not only gave Hardy a clear position of influence in terms of the history of the novel, but also wove him closely into Forster's own personal narrative, suggesting an almost familial connection. Similarly, in 1915, Robert Frost had claimed Hardy is 'my man' (241). In each case, the use of the possessive determiner places Hardy in proximity to each of the younger writers. However, whereas Forster made his statement part of his public discourse, Frost's comment was a private sentence within a letter to his friend, Sidney Cox. Similarly, Siegfried Sassoon, made a public declaration of indebtedness to Hardy in the form of a dedication in *The Old Huntsman and Other Poems* (1917); but only after making personal contact and sharing his gratitude in a letter sent in January 1917. Sassoon thanked Hardy for his novels which 'brought England nearer to me than anything else' during his time serving in France (21 January 1917). It is the shift between comments in correspondence, diaries and other personal archival material and the public arena of essays and criticism that intrigues me in this chapter. I argue that the interplay between private and public commentary is essential to understanding how Hardy was perceived by younger writers in the early part of the twentieth century – and how they perceived themselves in relation to Hardy.

Within the chapter I aim to address: how writers such as Siegfried Sassoon, Virginia Woolf, John Middleton Murry, Ford Madox Ford, Ezra Pound and Marie

Stopes made sense of Hardy both as their predecessor but also as a contemporary. How did writers from the next generation place Hardy in the modern world in relation to themselves? Harold Bloom's theory in *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973) suggests that predecessors appear as complex figures in the literary lives of next-generation writers.<sup>48</sup> Given that the end of Hardy's novel-writing almost coincided with the end of the nineteenth century, he was in some ways a Victorian predecessor to the next generation of modernist writers. However, Hardy bridged the two periods as he continued to revise editions of his novels and became known for his poetic work, including *Satires of Circumstance* (1914) and *Moments of Vision* (1917). As a result, Hardy can be regarded as part of the new wave of writing in a post-Victorian world. Was Hardy, then, perceived as a threat to new writers or as a continuing source of inspiration and support?

In 1922, Philip Guedalla published a collection of essays entitled *Men of Letters*, which looked back on a range of influential literary figures and included an essay on Hardy.<sup>49</sup> Guedalla observed a frustrating tradition of paying tribute in order to mark the end of an established writer's career, conveyed fittingly in his choice of colonial hunting metaphor:

The British critic is always out mammoth-hunting [...] his elephant gun is always ready, his glass is always sweeping the skyline for the great humped back, the curling tusks, the trunk, the lumbering, heavy tread of the Last, the very last of the Great Victorians. (53)

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<sup>48</sup> Walter Jackson Bate's *The Burden of the Past and the English Poet* (1970) also examines the idea of anxiety of influence. Bate concentrates on the period between 1660 and 1830.

<sup>49</sup> The collection was first published in 1922 under a different title and then re-published in 1927.

Yet, by continuing to produce literary works, Guedalla argues, Hardy 'refused to be caught and stuffed' (54):

Mr. Hardy is not the last of any species, least of all the Victorians; but his contemporaries may honour him as a contemporary without the faintest condescension. (55)

The question, then, is whether Hardy could be perceived as a 'father-figure to the Georgians' (34), as Jeffrey Meyers claims, when he was also engaged in his own processes of renewal? Was Hardy's new writing a destabilising force for younger writers who needed to position him as their predecessor in order to carve new spaces for themselves?

In his 1922 essay on Hardy, Guedalla also criticised the occurrence of 'an orgy of little presentations [made in recent years] to old gentlemen on behalf of the Younger Generation' (49). The use of capitalisation to collectively label all younger writers within one distinct noun phrase makes them a separate entity distanced from their predecessors. However, when Sassoon presented Hardy with a writer's tribute on his seventy-ninth birthday, in June 1919, it was an overt example of hero-worship that worked, not only as a mark of respect but also an act of encouragement for Hardy to continue to write for the modern world. This gift comprised forty of the leading poets writing autograph poems, and Sassoon delivered the volume to him personally. We can understand the impact on Hardy by the conscious shaping of the event entry in *Life and Work*:

It was almost his first awakening to the consciousness that an opinion had silently grown up as it were in the night, that he was no mean power in the contemporary world of poetry. (422)

Significantly, Hardy wrote letters to each of the contributors, which opened up new lines of communication between himself and a wider network of poets across generations.

#### 4.1 Hardy as a paternal figure to Georgian sons

In a letter to Florence Henniker, written in July 1921, Hardy named Sassoon – who was forty-six years younger – as one of the ‘Young Georgians’ that he was beginning to ‘have quite a paternal feeling, or grandpaternal, towards’ (2 July 1921, CL 6: 93). This had been encouraged by Sassoon’s uncle Hamo Thornycroft, who wrote to Hardy in January 1916:

Did you happen to see some verse signed “S.S.” in Friday’s <sup>^</sup>or Sat’s <sup>^</sup>Times? They are by my nephew Siegfried Sassoon. I hope you thought them promising. I think he has talent. (18 January 1916)

While Hardy might well have read and admired poems by ‘S. S.’, Thornycroft’s letter encouraged Hardy to regard the young poet’s development from a more paternal position, given the close friendship he already enjoyed with Sassoon’s uncle. As Jean Moorcroft Wilson suggests in her biography of Sassoon:

Hardy grew to love Sassoon, regarding him for the last ten years of his life as the son he had never had. And Sassoon, whose father had left home before his fifth birthday found in him the father-figure he craved. (58)

However, while Sassoon and Hardy’s relationship emerged organically, Virginia Woolf was critical of writers who attempted to construct a familial link with a predecessor merely through public declarations and tributes:

[Middleton] Murry has bred in me a vein of Grub Street spite which I never thought to feel in the flesh. He has brought out a little book of those clay-cold castrated costive comatose poems which he has the impertinence to dedicate to Hardy in terms which suggest that Hardy has adopted him as his spiritual son. Thank God, he is soundly drubbed in the newspapers. (VWCL 2: 485)

Here Woolf’s description of Murry’s poetry as ‘clay-cold’ and ‘castrated’ evokes a sense of Oedipal complexities that might be at play in a new writer’s textual



engagement with a literary father-figure. This is reinforced by Margaret Jensen who reads the poem 'To T. H.' in Murry's *Poems 1916-1920*, not as a tribute but as an act of slaying. Such a reading comes from the first line: 'He is gone'. In *Allusion to the Poets* Christopher Ricks criticises Bloom for what he regards as a tendency to make too much of 'the parental' (14) in his anxiety-influence theory and yet, there is legitimacy in exploring this aspect in the case of Hardy and some of the writers who sought a connection with him.<sup>50</sup>

In *Katherine Mansfield and Other Literary Portraits* (1949), Middleton Murry admitted:

I first met Thomas Hardy at Dorchester in May 1921. I had long desired to meet him; but when the volume of his *Collected Poems* appeared in the winter of 1919 the desire became almost a monomania. Certainly I had never longed to meet a living author so much. (218)

Therefore, if he was anxious to position Hardy as a literary father, Murry did at least recognise that it was a 'monomania' wrapped up in the precise social climate of a post-war age (218). Bloom acknowledged this as the first stage of working through the anxiety of influence, in which the younger writer experiences a 'profound act of reading that is a kind of falling in love with a literary work' (xxiii).

Murry wrote that his immersion in Hardy's poetry came at a time when he, like so many others, was grappling with what he termed 'the complete disillusion' after the 1918 Armistice:

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<sup>50</sup> When Bloom produced a revised edition of his theory, in 1997, he addressed Ricks's criticisms by explaining that he 'never meant by "anxiety of influence" a Freudian Oedipal rivalry, despite a rhetorical flourish or two in this book' (xxii).

At that time Hardy was, in truth, for me a being set apart. It was not merely that I was convinced that he was the only great English writer living in the world. There was also a peculiar quality in his greatness which had an intimate and almost painful appeal. In Hardy it seemed honesty was made absolute. He had purged out of himself the last trace of the lie in the soul. He was the only man in whom I believed. And to give this belief something of the passion of despair there was the precise point of time. It was at the end of the year of complete disillusion which followed the Armistice of 1918. We had hoped against hope that the peace would be so glorious and generous that it would somehow justify the sacrifice made to gain it. It was quite a different peace, and as the news of its shameful terms gradually became known the sense of hideous waste and the utter futility of the whole monstrous war became steadily deeper and deeper. One felt that England, the true England, had ceased to exist [...]. (218)

This insight into why Murry sought a connection with Hardy challenges Woolf's claim that his actions were simply those of an ambitious poet trying to make a name for himself. There is a deeper affinity at work here. Hardy offered the young war-weary poets a way back into the past, to a pre-war England with which they wanted to remain connected; as such he was a nostalgic figure not only for Murry but also for both Sassoon and Robert Graves.

In his published diary, *Siegfried's Journey* (1945), Sassoon declared that Hardy was 'genius made visible' (92), 'wizard-like' (89) and 'superhuman' (92). For Sassoon it seems to have been important to reinforce and preserve the construct of Hardy as 'the wizard' (92) through deferential hero-worshipping, or 'Hardy-worshipping' as Sassoon referred to it, and this required a certain distance and inequality to be maintained. This argument finds resonance with Robert Hemmings who explores Sassoon's need to find solace in the past before the War in *Modern Nostalgia*:<sup>51</sup>

The past was important to Sassoon not in and of itself, but in so far as it could provide sustenance for the modern present he found so barren,

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<sup>51</sup> Hemmings explores Sassoon's interest in fractured selves by turning to Sassoon's privately printed poem 'A Fragment of Autobiography', which focuses on Hardy (56).

politically, socio-economically, aesthetically and, increasingly, personally.  
(76)

And yet Hardy and Sassoon enjoyed an epistolary friendship for over a decade in which together they did confront the 'modern present'. As such, Hardy appears to have enjoyed a dual position as both a father-figure and a contemporary to the next wave of writers.

An initial desire, or anxiety, to preserve Hardy as a construct untainted by the realities of the present comes through in Sassoon's diary entry of his first visit to Max Gate in November 1918:

For in spite of his letters to me I still looked on him as such an eminent and almost legendary figure that it was puzzling to imagine oneself with him in any ordinary human relationship. (89)

The fronted subordinate clause 'For in spite of his letters to me' suggests that letter relationships do not constitute the full human experience; the young poet has been able to preserve a constructed version of Hardy as a 'legendary figure', as he must have first appeared to Sassoon while he was reading in the trenches. By contrast, there is a certain apprehension when Sassoon knows that he will meet Hardy in person, as this brings with it a risk that the construct will shatter when he meets with reality. In his diary Sassoon comments:

I travelled towards Dorchester in bright frosty weather. Naturally, my mind was full of speculations as to how far the Mr Hardy of Max Gate would harmonize with the writer whose works I had absorbed so fruitfully [...] (88)

For Hemmings, the mental compartmentalising of different selves was a product of modernity (56), and this comes through in Sassoon's referencing of two distinct beings: 'Mr Hardy of Max Gate' is presented as separate entity to Thomas Hardy the 'writer'. While this remained part of Sassoon's private

discourse during Hardy's lifetime, the account was then published as 'Hardy as I knew Him' in *John O' London's Weekly* in June 1940.

Writing to Charles Causley in 1955, Sassoon expressed concern over how Hardy's legacy was managed by others:

Did you listen to Miss Maloney's 'Hardy by his friends'? I am hypersensitive about T.H., so thought it [unclear] of him, & in places, rather awful. At Cambridge, in October, Robert Graves told me it was my duty to pay my tribute in this programme with Miss M. at his elbow in an extraordinary hat. What did he do? Read – word-for-word – some trivial extracts from an article he wrote when T.H. died! (He went to Max Gate once.) (26 February 1955)<sup>52</sup>

Sassoon sets himself apart from others who feigned ownership over Hardy's legacy, expressing a concern with textual methods of preserving and promoting a literary figure after death. While anecdotes might seem appealing as they suggest a snapshot of the real person, they are subjectively retold and, as Sassoon points out, often trivial. In his own diary, Sassoon noted after one visit to Max Gate 'an unwillingness to try and reconstruct the hours. I don't want to record trivialities' (128). Given that his diary became a published document, in general Sassoon made the decision to preserve his heroic perceptions of Hardy, rather than dilute them with records of more anecdotal, chatty encounters. This was in contrast to Robert Graves who laid claim to Hardy in

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<sup>52</sup> This letter is held in Special Collections at the University of Exeter. The digitisation project that accompanies this thesis has the potential to highlight connections between the archives of different Southwest writers and support further exploration of overlapping networks. For example, in addition to the Causley archive, the University of Exeter has a number of letters written to and from Henry Williamson, who wrote to Florence Hardy after his visit to Max Gate in 1927.

his autobiography *Goodbye to All That* (1929), despite, as Sassoon noted, having only been to 'Max Gate once' (Sassoon to Causley 26 February 1955).

Sassoon visited Hardy at Max Gate at least ten times between 1918 and 1928. In the last few years of Hardy's life, Sassoon recalls him saying: 'You'd better come again soon or you may find me over at Stinsford churchyard' (*Siegfried's Journey* 150). Before they met, though, they had already established an egalitarian connection discussing poetry and their views on the war through their epistles. Sassoon's first two letters were written from the trenches. A third letter was sent in May 1917, this time from Chapelwood Manor in Sussex, where Sassoon was recovering after being wounded that April. In this letter Sassoon emphasises a mental affinity between the two writers:

Your letter has given me the greatest pleasure. The poems which you like are the ones I would have preferred you to like. (20 May 1917)

This was in response to Hardy's letter, posted two days earlier, in which Hardy offered 'this simple line to tell you how much I like to have [*The Old Huntsman*]' and noted that:

I appreciate thoroughly, "When I'm among a blaze of lights", & "Blighters", & much like the grim humour of "The Tombstone Maker", & "They", the pathos of "The Hero", & the reticent poignancy of "The Working Party". How we realize that young man! (18 May 1917, *CL* 5: 213)

Reflecting on what Sassoon was communicating in his poetry, Hardy uses the letter space to share his thoughts on the war: 'I don't know how I should stand the suspense of this evil time if it were not for the sustaining power of poetry. May the war be over soon' (*CL* 5: 213).

Sassoon's letter from Chapelwood Manor is almost formed as a diary entry, recording the 'views across the woods & farms to the Downs', his 'aged host, Lord Brassey' 'reading aloud' Kipling's poem 'Sussex' before moving into a more analytical style of recording his thoughts on Brassey and on Kipling's poem, which he suggests was 'perhaps a little too pontifical' (20 May 1917). There is a tone of comfortable ramblings in this letter, and Sassoon acknowledges as he moves to the salutation that 'I am afraid this is rather an informal letter, but I don't think you will mind that' (20 May 1917). Moorcroft Wilson describes Sassoon as a 'prolific correspondent' who himself wrote that letter-writing was his "safety-valve" in a note to H. M. Tomlinson, in February 1949 (4). Therefore he was almost immediately at ease when sharing his thoughts with Hardy in letters. This was in contrast to Middleton Murry, who admitted to Hardy that:

Writing to you is a nervous affair. I am sure I would have written to Napoleon with less of a tremor. But of course I wouldn't have felt as absolutely natural and easy with Bonaparte as I did with you and Mrs Hardy. Nevertheless what might have been easy to say when we were walking together to Barnes' grave has become too difficult to write. (20 February 1919)

In *Siegfried's Journey* Sassoon reveals that it was his time in Chapelwood Manor and other places of convalescence and leave that allowed him time to develop his 'anti-war ideas', whereas 'one couldn't be "above the battle" while engaged in it' (48). It seems understandable that he developed a closeness to Hardy at the same time.

There is evident overlap in the way that Hardy and Sassoon perceived and expressed the follies of war. In a letter from 1916, Sassoon had commented that 'I have just had German measles & that has probably given me a feeling of

sympathy for the enemy' (24 February 1916) (Figure 22). While there is a surface flippancy in this comment, Sassoon was sharing a sentiment that would have found resonance with Hardy, echoing as it did Hardy's poem 'The Pity of It' (1915) which sought to draw attention to a common line of identity between the German and British peoples through shared origins of language: 'Between kin folk tongued even as are we' (l.12). Sassoon's epistolary comment a year later might be taken as a nod to the sentiment in Hardy's poem. In *Siegfried's Journey*, one entry for 1916 reads: 'the jingoism of the jokes and songs [of music halls] appeared to "mock the riddled corpses round Bapaume". Perhaps I was intolerant, but I found a good many people – Thomas Hardy among them – who agreed' (45).

1<sup>st</sup> Batt<sup>n</sup>. R.W.F.

1916.

B.E.F.

Feb. 24<sup>th</sup>.

Dear Mr Hardy.

It was a great pleasure to me to receive your letter. The book will be sent you in a week or two, but I shall not be able to inscribe your name in it owing to my being at these wars.

It is not a cheerful performance, 'coming back again'. I wish I could find a spark of glory in it. But there is none now: only organized destruction, & a general feeling of hopelessness. The Army is one vast Stupidity; one does one's job & longs for ignoble comforts. And the humour of the Army, — could anything be more English? But no doubt if I were on General Haig's staff I should be an Optimist!

Everyone believes in the war except the man in the shell hole. But I have just had German measles, & that has probably given me a feeling of sympathy for the enemy. With all good wishes.

Yours sincerely,  
Siegfried Sassoon.

Fig. 22. Letter from Siegfried Sassoon to Hardy (24 February 1916). Dorset County Museum archive, H.5131.



In the same letter Sassoon described the First World War as ‘organised destruction’, which shows how the poetic expression of both men carried through from their literary into their epistolary writing:

It is not a cheerful performance ‘coming back again’. I wish I could find a spark of glory in it. But there is none now: only organised destruction, and a general feeling of hopelessness, the army is one vast stupidity [...]. (24 February 1916)

The phrasing of ‘coming back again’ mirrors the line ‘Of course they’re longing to go out again’ (l.5) in Sassoon’s poem ‘Survivors’ (1917).

This affinity between the two writers, so evident in their letters, becomes established as a legacy when Sassoon recorded in his diary that Hardy had directly influenced his writing:

*June 26 [1922]* Very interesting talk with T. H. after lunch. He spoke very freely about his methods of writing stories. [...] His talk has decided me against trying any long tales in verse. There must be a reaction against the diffuseness of present-day writers. Why shouldn’t I develop the style of poem which T.H. has invented (the *condensed plot* kind)? Strolling in the green-shaded garden-alley before tea-time I felt that T.H. had helped me greatly – kindled a spark perhaps [...]. (*Siegfried’s Diaries* 43-45, qtd. in Gibson, 130)

Later, in a letter to Causley in January 1955, Sassoon acknowledged that he was ‘without knowing it at the time, [...] influenced by T.H.’s Satires of Circumstance, which I read in the Winter of 1914. If you compare them with my One-legged Man, and The Tombstone Maker, the influence is fairly obvious’ (26 January 1955). Sassoon used Hardy’s words to communicate his own views on the futility of war when he published an article on ‘*The Dynasts* in War-Time’ in *The Spectator* (6 February 1942), stating that ‘those of my readers who have not read or re-read *The Dynasts* since September, 1939, would be wise to do so’ (7). In so doing Sassoon placed Hardy in a new world, even imagining his writing as if he were still a contemporary:

[Hardy's] imaginative observation would have made the summer night-skies of 1940 his own in a few museful stanzas. Searchlights and the sound of aeroplanes would have been described with exactitude and sublimated by that tragic intimacy of thought and expression of which he held the secret. (7)

In this essay, Hardy the wizard lives on through Sassoon's words and sits in the modern world next to 'the sound of aeroplanes', despite having died over a decade before (7). For Hemmings, Sassoon's immersion in *The Dynasts* after World War One and again during World War Two is a nostalgic act:

Sassoon implies that 're-reading' *The Dynasts* in war-time, like an act of revisiting the past, measuring out the present in a patter of comforting familiarity [...] (76)

However, it was also a way of moving Hardy into a new present.

#### **4.2 Publishing Hardy in the twentieth-century: Victorian, proto-modernist, or both?**

If Hardy was home to a generation of writers who had grown up as his readers, in the modern world, they could also provide a home for his poetic work in the periodicals of which they became the editors. For instance, within the Hardy archive sits W.L. Courtney's 1907 letter from the *Fortnightly Review*, rejecting the poem 'A Sunday Morning Tragedy' on the grounds that 'the world could not endure' such horrors as infanticide (3 October 1907) (Figure 23). However, Hardy's rejection by Courtney became a stimulus for Ford Madox Ford and Christopher Marwood – who sought to provide a platform for texts that had previously been silenced. A letter from Ford to Hardy recalled a morning in Sussex when Marwood came to him with the notion that they should 'start a magazine' to print Hardy's controversial poem. Three years after Hardy sought

publication, 'A Sunday Morning Tragedy' found its place in *The English Review*, a modernist periodical. In this way, the poem, and the correspondence surrounding it, tells its own story of how Hardy straddled two worlds. Patricia Hutchins argues that 'it was this very hostility on the part of the literary establishment which caused some younger writers to rally to [Hardy's] support' (37). Ezra Pound provided a space for Hardy in the American political review and literary criticism magazine *The Dial* and Robert Graves, through Sassoon, placed Hardy within the pages of the modernist literary periodical *The Owl*.

Telephone No 2711. GERRARD.  
Telegraphic Address, "PICKWICK, LONDON"

CHAPMAN & HALL,  
LIMITED.  
FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW.

11, Henrietta Street,  
Covent Garden.  
London, October 3rd 1907  
W.C.

Thomas Hardy, Esq.

Dear Mr. Hardy,

I have read with deep interest the poem you were good enough to send me, entitled "A Sunday Morning Tragedy". You know how proud I am that you send your poems to me, and how glad I have been on several occasions to publish them. But I fear that I cannot possibly publish your latest poem, because of its subject. Personally I sometimes have a doubt whether even the greatest art can illustrate certain themes, or rather a certain class of horrors. I remember hearing a great lawyer say once that the worst cruelties were hidden away in law reports, and rightly so hidden, because if they were published to the world the world could not endure them.

Pray forgive my inability, which you must put down to the fact that the "Fortnightly Review" circulates among families!

Faithfully yours,

W. L. COURTNEY.

(Editor Fort: Review)

Fig. 23. Letter from W.L. Courtney to Hardy (3 October 1907). Dorset County Museum, H.1628.

In his diary, Sassoon noted that Hardy 'wrote poetry to please himself, and even in 1918 was not fully aware of the admiration for his verse prevalent among other poets, both old and young' (91). However, by this point there was a regular stream of letters requesting contributions to the modernist periodicals, and when Middleton Murry wrote to Hardy in 1919 to request a contribution for the revived *Athenaeum*, he openly confessed that the younger writers, and their fledgling periodicals, 'desire to sail under your flag' (3 March 1919). Hardy replied to Murry:

I am glad to hear that there is a prospect of a review so famous coming to life again — though perhaps I ought not to be — as it gave me some hard knocks occasionally in its previous incarnation — some 40 or 50 years ago. (2 March 1919, *CL* 5: 297)

The footnotes in the *Collected Letters* contextualise 'hard knocks' as a reference to the *Athenaeum's* negative review of *The Return of the Native*. However, the temporal distance of 'some 40 or 50 years ago' highlights how Hardy's ideas, always so far ahead of his time, might now be in line with the worldview reflected in this new periodical. Renewed pleas convinced Hardy to send two verses of 'According to the Mighty Working', which appeared in the April 1919 edition. Murry sought to rewrite the *Athenaeum's* relationship with Hardy, not only by publishing his poetry, but also by taking on the role of critic, for example, in his review of Hardy's *Collected Poems* in November 1919. In this article Murry appears to want to speak directly to Hardy, as well as sway the opinion of his readers, when he opens with a complaint that Hardy frequently made himself: 'One meets fairly often with the critical opinion that Mr Hardy's poetry is incidental [and] [...] held to be completely subordinate to his novels' (*Athenaeum* 43). Murry's essay, then, works to convince the reader otherwise and to 'allow Mr Hardy's poetry a clean impact upon the critical

consciousness' (81). Murry makes a clear age distinction in order to show Hardy that the new generation of writers has the capacity to regard him as a modern poet, separate to his established status as a Victorian novelist: 'It happens therefore that to a somewhat younger critic the perspective may be different' (44), and 'We discover all that our elders discover in Mr Hardy's novels; we see more than they in his poetry. To our mind it exists superbly in its own right' (44). For Murry, an essential reason to regard Hardy as a 'major poet' (49) was his ability to convey truth through his poetry and focus 'the manifold and inexhaustible quality of life [...] into a single revelation' (47). If Murry had wanted to gain Hardy's attention and trust through this espousal then it appeared to have worked, as it opened up a richer personal dialogue between them:

Hardy had sent me some very kindly letters, and in particular one concerning a review of the 'Collected Poems' which I had written for *The Athenaeum*. (*Katherine Mansfield* 215)

Murry works to unite his public discourse on Hardy with the concept of a personal relationship with the writer, giving himself a more privileged position in terms of literary history. While the phrase 'kindly letters' might suggest long, friendly exchanges, most of Hardy's early letters to Murry were quite short and some were more of a functional nature, written on brief correspondence cards, for example when Hardy was replying to Murry about proofs of 'According to the Mighty Working':

Dear Sir:

Many thanks for proof. If not inconvenient will you let me have back the hurried type-written copy sent: & this corrected proof with the revise. (23 March 1919, *CL* 5: 301)

Nevertheless, Hardy wrote warmly of Murry's 'beautifully printed sheaf of poems' – to which he gave a tentative seal of approval on receiving a collection

in the post: 'I am sure they will be as good inside as out, from glimpses I have taken', he declared (CL 5: 301). He was also supportive of Murry's work to revive the *Athenaeum*:

I am so glad to hear that the Athenaeum makes headway. I consider it quite a "live" paper, & I marvel at your energy in keeping it going so briskly, & at the same time doing your own particular work outside the paper. (CL 5: 301)

From this point a more friendly familiarity developed in their correspondence, and in response to Murry's November essay Hardy wrote very positively:

In going through it (I have not read it carefully yet) I have been struck with some of your casual remarks. One is: "There is no necessary connection between poetic apprehension & poetic method." You could throw a flood of light on the history & art of poetry by using that as the text for a long article [...] (8 November 1919, CL 5: 341)

Nevertheless, as before, there was perhaps more of a self-serving motivation in Murry's interactions with Hardy. When later recounting their conversation in *Katherine Mansfield and Other Literary Portraits*, Murry states that Hardy 'was generous enough to say that the history of English poetry ought to be re-written in accordance with the principles I had tried to establish in regard to his own' (215), therefore turning Hardy's comment in the letter into a more profound connection between the two writers on its publication.

#### **4.4 Modernist daughters: survival and renewal**

Jeffrey Meyers draws attention to Sassoon's deliberate echoing of Hardy's poem 'When I set out for Lyonesse' (187) in the younger poet's tribute 'Max

Gate', written after Hardy's death (38). The original poem by Hardy includes the lines:

Nor did the wisest wizard guess  
What would bechance at Lyonesse  
While I should sojourn there (ll.10-12)

Sassoon then refers to Hardy as 'the Wessex wizard' in his own poem (l.7).

Weaving Hardy's poem into his own through this allusion shows not only the younger poet's gratitude and admiration but also ensures that Hardy undergoes a process of survival and renewal in this new poetic work. Similarly, Jane de Gay (2007) observes evidence of this in Virginia Woolf's writing:

Unlike the Bloomian account of influence in which a poet fights for posterity of his own work, Woolf seeks reassurance of the survival of others: the survival of the 'great minds' of literature [...] Literature becomes a space in which the living might both identify with and distance themselves from the dead[.] (93)

To respond to and extend de Gay's argument, this section marks a shift from Georgian sons to Modernist daughters, and examines Woolf's relationship with Hardy as a case in point.

The literary map connecting Hardy to Woolf has been plotted by a number of critics, including, not only de Gay, but also Steve Ellis (2007), Margaret M Jensen (2007) and Rosemary Sumner (2000), but here I focus specifically on how Woolf's personal correspondence and diary entries help us to understand her perception of her position in relation to Hardy. Treating this as an evolving perception I move from an analysis of Woolf as a young female, middle-class reader, taking into account her personal connection as daughter of Hardy's friend and editor, Leslie Stephen, through to Woolf as an established modernist novelist. How can we unify the construct of the literary fan that is presented in



Woolf's first letter to Hardy in 1915 with the modernist writer of essays such as 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown' and 'Modern Fiction'?

Woolf's claim that the Victorian age, 'for all its faults, was prolific of genius' is perhaps the most helpful statement in understanding how she viewed Hardy but this was an opinion which she settled on in the 1920s and it was not without some re-negotiation of earlier views. Regarding Hardy as a literary genius of the previous age, she documents her indebtedness publicly and privately, while also accepting a level of ambivalence to literary greatness.

Steve Ellis challenges the idea of Woolf as a modernist and instead offers the term 'post-Victorian' as a more fitting label (2). Ellis makes a strong argument for moving away from readings of Woolf based too centrally on her comment that 'in or about December 1910 human character changed' (2), as this suggests a too radical rebellion against her Victorian past. While I position Woolf as a modernist writer in this chapter, my examination of her letters and diary entries offers support for Ellis's re-reading of Woolf: her archival records show a conscious desire to connect with her literary heritage. Living in an age in which diaries and letters were on one level private thoughts and, on another, future public expressions of identity, when published posthumously, Woolf would have been aware that her comments on her literary predecessors would have been held up for scrutiny.

There is, however, a contrast between Woolf's comments on Hardy's novels in *A Passionate Apprentice: the Early Journals 1897-1909* (1990) and her later

diary records. Writing in 1903, at the age of just twenty-one, Woolf read *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and her summary shows a worldly understanding beyond her years:

He has taken a grim subject and stuck to it till the bitter end. It is [...] written with the purpose of showing how a girl may be as pure as snow, & do things that women may not do – how in spite of her purity, the judgement of a brutal world descends upon her, ruins her life, & sends her to the gallows. (*Passionate Apprentice* 205)

Woolf's summary intimates a feminist reading that directly engages with the subtitle 'a pure woman' that so shocked the original Victorian readers. However, there is no sense of her excitement about the novel. While finding it worthwhile reading material, Woolf was critical of Hardy for being 'so sternly determined that we shall see the brutality of certain social conventions that he tends to spoil his novel as a novel' (206). This is Woolf reading the text as an apprentice novelist, and her use of 'girl' suggests an emotional distancing from the protagonist, perhaps as a result of the class differences that put Tess in a position to which Woolf herself would not have been subjected. Nevertheless she admits it is 'an impressive bit of work'. Read alongside Henry James's *Roderick Hudson*, Hardy's novel is given greater merit, despite Woolf's appreciation for James's modernist touches (205).

Still in her self-labelled apprentice phase, in 1908, Woolf also explored Hardy's *Two on a Tower*, and used it to answer the question 'Is Thomas Hardy among the Classics?' (386). It was perhaps unfair to use one of his less successful novels on which to judge his classic status, and her criticisms are those of a modernist eager to move away from some of the plot devices imposed upon Victorian writers:

Hardy goes on to complicate the story by means of the most arbitrary conventions. He forces his warm human beings against a wire framework of a plot, as though they could not stand up by themselves. There are all kinds of surprises, & deceptions; & instead of thinking of the stars or human love you think of letters & dates, hidden names & so forth. This, I conceive, is a pity, & hinders Hardy from being among the classics. (387)

This judgement sounds final but it was one that Woolf would come to reflect on time and again, later deciding that Hardy was a 'great' writer. One year on, for example, Woolf wrote to Lady Robert Cecil and declared that she was 'doing nothing but read[ing] Mrs Carlyle and Hardy' (VWCL 1: 207), and other comments in her diaries and correspondence suggest that she was never far from Hardy's texts in those years. When she wrote to her Bloomsbury friend, Lytton Strachey, on Boxing Day of 1912, she was 'half way through *Return of the Native*'. Given that this was two years after the supposedly seismic literary shift that occurred in 1910, it is interesting that the letter calls up an image of Woolf sitting beside her husband who was 'reading the poems of John Donne' – an acknowledgement of two modernists immersing themselves in the works of their predecessors. For Jensen, Woolf's reference to *Return of the Native*, coming as it did at a time when Woolf was revising *A Voyage Out*, offers potential evidence that Hardy may have been a direct influence for Woolf's first novel (142). It is more likely that Woolf was reading a number of different novels at the time, but perhaps Hardy features more prominently in her diaries and letters because she was weaving him into her personal narrative of literary heritage.

Like Siegfried Sassoon, Woolf had a legitimate claim to familial closeness with Hardy, given the longstanding friendship and professional relationship between her father, Leslie Stephen, and the Victorian writer. Ellis notes that:

The complex, social and cultural network that descended to Woolf from the Stephen family line and from that of Leslie Stephen's two wives veritably embedded Woolf in the Victorian past, knitted the literary and the familial together in an imposing 'pedigree' she was keenly conscious of, and enabled her, through the 'social side' she 'inherited' from her mother (D II.250), to make full use of it. (11)

When Woolf visited Max Gate in 1926, she records Hardy's recollection of seeing her, or her sister, as a very young child with Leslie Stephen, which builds a paternal element into any sense of narrative linking the two. However, her personal writing offers an active site of renegotiation, creating a necessary distance from Hardy so that she could become his common reader. Despite the constant that Hardy became in Woolf's reading and her published essays, she only corresponded with him twice and visited him once.

It was with her friend and teacher, Janet Case, that Woolf discussed her shifting opinions of Hardy the writer. Case began tutoring Woolf in classics in 1902 and the two became close, as their letters reveal. In December 1914 Woolf asked: 'Have you read Thomas Hardy's new poems? They're quite the most beautiful things I've ever read since – certainly since Meredith – Shall I send you them?' (10 December 1914 *VWCL* 2: 55). This suggests that Woolf's appreciation of Hardy's poetry may have been important in her re-evaluation of his fiction.

When Woolf finally wrote to Hardy in 1915, after years of desiring to do so, her letter is followed quickly by another one addressed to Janet Case, with the postscript 'Just got this letter from Thomas Hardy! I wrote to thank him for his poem about father – will you keep it for me?' (26 January 1915, *VWCL* 2: 59). Clearly the material item was of significant value to Woolf, who entrusted the

safe storage of the letter to her tutor. The self constructed in this letter is part literary fan, part family friend (Figure 25).

TELEPHONE 496 RICHMOND.

17, The Green,  
Richmond.

From Woolf -  
(Daughter of  
Leslie Stephen)

17<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1915

Dear Mr Hardy,

I have long wished to tell you how profoundly grateful I am to you for your poems & novels, but naturally it seemed an impertinence to do so. When however, your poem to my father, Leslie Stephen, appeared in Satires of Circumstance this autumn, I felt that I might perhaps be allowed to thank you for that at least. That poem, & the reminiscences you contributed to Professor Maitland's Life of him, remain in my mind as incomparably the truest & most imaginative portrait of him in existence, for which alone his children should be always grateful to you.

But besides this one would like to

Fig. 24a. Letter from Virginia Woolf to Hardy (17 January 1915: 1). Dorset County Museum archive, H.5954.

H. 5954

Thank you for the magnificent work which  
 you have already done, & are still to do.  
 The younger generation, who care for poetry &  
 literature, owe you an immeasurable debt,  
 & in particular for your last volume of poems  
 which, to me at any rate, is the most remarkable  
 book to appear in my life time.

I write only to satisfy a very old desire,  
 & not to trouble you to reply.

Believe me  
 Yours sincerely  
 Virginia Woolf

Fig. 24b. Letter from Virginia Woolf to Hardy (17 January 1915). Dorset County Museum archive, H.5954.

For Jensen, Woolf's gratitude towards Hardy for preserving a memory of her father is the crux of the letter, and certainly on the surface it is what the letter purports to be about. However, this was also a moment when Woolf wanted to present herself to Hardy as a perceptive reader, and perhaps draw attention to herself as a writer. She identifies the poem, 'The Schreckhorn', as the memorial that most effectively captures her father, even though it doesn't refer to his character in precise detail. As such she displays an appreciation of Hardy as a poet of the twentieth century; if not part of the modernist movement, then still speaking for a new way of living, post-Victorian and post-war. Whereas Jensen regards the poem – in the context of Hardy's own Bloomian anxiety of influence and need to overpower a precursor – as a deliberate misreading of Leslie Stephen's character (20), Woolf understood that it was the most accurate picture because it revealed confusions that resonated with her own memories of her father. Both Woolf and Hardy had experienced Stephen's need to control and their own need for independence and so possibly this poetic memorial allowed Woolf to feel closer to Hardy. In this context, regardless of the familial connection, the stronger bond seems to be that of reader and writer existing in close proximity. In her 1924 essay, 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown', Woolf had commented that there should be no such 'division between reader and writer, this humility on your part, these professional airs and graces on [theirs], [...] corrupt and emasculate the books which should be the healthy offspring of a close and equal alliance between us' ('Mr Bennett' 20). Here, the term 'offspring' shakes off connotations of literal paternalism to focus on a connection that could exist between any two individuals through the shared site of a text. Although it might seem at odds with her ethos of equality that Woolf initially adopts the fan convention of humility in her letter to Hardy, in making this postal



connection with him, Woolf creates proximity. As Woolf states in 'Mr Bennet and Mrs Brown', the great writer who must receive and reply to your letter, is actively 'com[ing] down off their plinth' ('Mr Bennett' 20).

By the time Woolf wrote the essay 'Modern Fiction' (1925), she was able to state confidently that 'our quarrel, then, is not with the classics', and she included Hardy, along with Conrad and Hudson, within this concept of classic writers, asserting that they deserved 'unconditional gratitude' (103). This sort of comment might be expected, given the shift from private to public discourse, but it also reveals a process of reflection as Woolf transformed from apprentice to established writer herself. Unlike the work of 'Mr Wells, Mr Bennett, and Mr Galsworthy' in which 'life escapes' (103; 105), Woolf now appreciates Hardy as a true writer, with *The Mayor of Casterbridge* one of the 'high examples' by which all new literature should be measured (107). Her acknowledgement that 'if a writer were a free man and not a slave, [...] he could write what he chose, not what he must' (106), implies a greater understanding of the restrictions placed upon Hardy's generation as a result of her own maturity and her dedicated years reading the Victorians.

Following Hardy's death in 1928, Woolf published 'The Novels of Thomas Hardy', which opened with a definitive statement that also suggests Woolf had resolved her conflict regarding Hardy's literary status, although her comments would have been shaped by the context and nature of the essay as an obituary:

When we say that the death of Thomas Hardy leaves English fiction without a leader, we mean that there is no other writer whose supremacy would be generally accepted [...] (1)

While this opening speaks of an immediate and immeasurable loss, Woolf had been developing the piece over a number of years and the closing sentiments of the paragraph speak of the distance felt between the modern writers and Hardy: 'the novels that were written so long ago that they seem as detached from the fiction of the moment as Hardy himself was remote from the stir of the present and its littleness' ('The Novels' 1).

In terms of a Bloomian anxiety of influence, the argument would follow that the new modernist writers had to kill off their Victorian predecessors to ensure they posed no threat in their own time. If so then, Woolf is also guilty of this act even before she started writing Hardy's literary obituary. In 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown', Woolf argues that 'the men and women who began writing novels in 1910 or thereabouts had this great difficulty to face – that there was no English novelist living from whom they could learn their business' (9); she gets round the awkward fact that Hardy was still very much 'living' by explaining that he 'has written no novel since 1895' (9). Nevertheless, both Jensen and Jane de Gay present evidence of Woolf's metaphorical killing of Hardy when she wrote that Hardy was a master that had 'long since withdrawn from the arena' in 'How it Strikes a Contemporary', an article for *The Times Literary Supplement* in April 1923. Jensen points to correspondence between Hardy and Vere Collins in which Hardy commented that this was a 'curious blunder' that 'ought to be corrected' (7 April 1923, *CL* 6:190). While Woolf may have only meant that Hardy was no longer writing fiction, Hardy's remark suggests he felt that he was being written out of the contemporary literary scene at a time when was still very active as a poet. Jensen advocates this reading, suggesting that 'Woolf's

declaration of Hardy's retirement in this essay could be read as a further example of her desire to 'slay' her presumed precursor' (148). For Jensen, this resulted in Hardy declining to contribute to *The Nation and Athenaeum*, referring to himself through the metaphor of 'the sere and yellow leaf'. However, by taking stock of the archived letters more widely, there is evidence to show that by 1925 he was regularly encouraging requests to go to younger writers. It may have also been that he did not feel he had a poem that would sit comfortably in Leonard Woolf's periodical at that time. When Woolf's comment is read in combination with her use of the following metaphor in 'Modern Fiction', it is possible to argue that Woolf was simply giving Hardy the more enjoyable position of a novelist that was no longer subject to critical attack:

On the flat, in the crowd, half blind with dust, we look back with envy to those happier warriors, whose battle is won and whose achievements wear so serene an air of accomplishment that we can scarcely refrain from whispering that the fight was not so fierce for them as for us. (103)

Christopher Ricks was critical of Bloom for presenting poetry as "a psychic battlefield upon which authentic forces struggle for the only victory worth winning" (10). In *Allusion to the Poets* (2002) Ricks then went on to offer a way of reading influence as gratitude and allusion as a more positive 'way of dealing with the predicaments and responsibilities of the poet as heir' (10). The two sides of the debate seem to have been weighed up by Woolf, half a century earlier, and played out in her third novel, *Jacob's Room* (1922). Traces of anxiety-influence come through in the opening of chapter four in which Jacob plans to finally read Shakespeare during a boat trip to the Scilly Isles, but ends up losing his book, when 'confound it! The sail flapped. Shakespeare was knocked overboard' (39). Here the copy of Shakespeare's work represents the

ultimate literary predecessor of the Western canon. In Bloom's words, 'Shakespeare will not allow you to bury him, or escape him, or replace him' (xviii) and yet here is Woolf throwing him into the sea just three chapters in. As a symbolic gesture, what I argue is that this then provides greater freedom for allusions and intertextual references to come into play, enabling Woolf to incorporate gratitude on her own creative terms. While there is no mention of Woolf reading *Jude* in her diaries or letters, there is a subtle echo of the rook scene from Hardy's 1895 novel in *Jacob's Room*. The description comes just moments after Shakespeare has been lost overboard:

The rooks settled; the rooks rose. The trees which they touched so capriciously seemed insufficient to lodge their numbers. The tree-tops sang with the breeze in them; the branches creaked audibly and dropped now and then, though the season was midsummer, husks or twigs. Up went the rooks and down again, rising in lesser numbers each time as the sager birds made ready to settle, for the evening was already spent enough to make the air inside the wood almost dark. The moss was soft; the tree-trunks spectral. Beyond them lay a silvery meadow. The pampas grass raised its feathery spears from mounds of green at the end of the meadow. A breadth of water gleamed. Already the convolvulus moth was spinning over the flowers. Orange and purple, nasturtium and cherry pie, were washed into the twilight, but the tobacco plant and the passion flower, over which the great moth spun, were white as china. The rooks creaked their wings together on the tree-tops, and were settling down for sleep when, far off, a familiar sound shook and trembled—increased—fairly dinned in their ears—scared sleepy wings into the air again—the dinner bell at the house. (46)

Like Jude's rooks, the birds in this passage are disturbed by a man-made device that frightens them into flight. While there is no human figure, equivalent to Hardy's Jude, to show empathy and extend a 'magic thread of fellow-feeling' toward them, the narrative focus nonetheless encourages the reader to empathize with the nonhuman experience of the animal. In this way, Woolf's writing takes on a Hardyesque quality, not so much in style but in the underlying commentary on human-animal relations. As Derek Ryan argues, Woolf

developed an interest in '[reconceptualising] the complex spaces shared by human and nonhuman animals' (134) and exploring the sense in which 'nonhuman and humans are materially, socially, and emotionally co-involved' (136). In Jensen's study of what Bloom termed 'creative misreading', she argues for the 'vital importance of Thomas Hardy to Woolf's fiction' but this aspect of human-animal relations has not been given much critical attention to date. Later Woolf extended her interest in the animal's perspective into a full narrative, creating the fictional biography of a dog in *Flush*.<sup>53</sup> This creative venture was inspired by reading the love letters of Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning. Perhaps, then, even Woolf's diary record of her visit to Max Gate, in which Hardy spent much of his time telling Woolf about the antics of his dog, Wessex, could be reviewed in terms of influence and inspiration? For a new generation of writers, taking up the challenge of how to improve a post-war world, it is significant that Hardy was remembered by many for what Sassoon referred to as a 'gentle compassion for all living creatures whom [Hardy] longed to defend against the chanceful injustice and calamity of earthly existence' (91).

It is in her memorial essay that Woolf seems to find resonance between her thoughts on writing and Hardy's:

He is already [in his first novel] possessed of the conviction that a novel is not a toy, nor an argument; it is a means of giving truthful if harsh and violent impressions of the lives of men and women. ('The Novels' 1)

Use of the word 'impressions' in relation to Hardy's work suggests that Woolf came to regard him as a proto-modernist, despite the acknowledgement that Hardy's first published novel required the reader to 'go back more than a

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<sup>53</sup> For a full analysis of *Flush: A Biography*, see Derek Ryan's 'The Question of the Animal in *Flush*' in *Virginia Woolf and the Materiality of Theory* (2013).

generation' ('The Novels' 1). Christos Hadjiyiannis notes that, in 'A Lecture on Modern Poetry', T. E. Hulme drew on 'contemporaneous developments in painting where the "modern spirit" had already manifested itself as Impressionism [...] establishing analogical alliances across the arts' ('Cultures of' n. pag. ) because he argued that modern poetry should present 'momentary impressions or images as these are received by the poet's mind, with these, in turn, temporarily uniting to suggest a new image' ('Cultures of' n. pag.). Similarly, Woolf uses Hardy's own phrase, "moments of vision", to 'describe those passages of astonishing beauty and force which are to be found in every book that he wrote' ('The Novels' 2). This was the title of Hardy's 1917 poetry collection, and one that Woolf surely read given her reference. Yet here she applies it to his prose, almost anticipating her own use of the phrase 'moments of being', to explain how Hardy, 'at his greatest, [...] gives us impressions' ('The Novels' 2). Woolf identifies 'the wagon with Fanny's dead body inside travelling along the road under the dripping trees' as one moment of vision from *Far from the Madding Crowd*, and it is surprising that this passage has not been given more critical attention as a source of influence on Woolf's own writing.

The air was an eye suddenly struck blind. The waggon and its load rolled no longer on the horizontal division between clearness and opacity, but were imbedded in an elastic body of a monotonous pallor throughout. There was no perceptible motion in the air, not a visible drop of water fell upon the leaf of the beeches, birches, and firs composing the wood on either side. The trees stood in an attitude of intentness, as if they waited longingly for a wind to come and rock them. A startling quiet overhung all surrounding things – so completely, that the crunching of the waggon wheels was as great a noise, and small rustles, which had never obtained a hearing except by night, were distinctly individualised. (*FFMC* 42: 222)

This moment of vision is one in which the scene is made up of a series of impressions, even though the overarching sense is one of blindness, or numbness. It is Woolf's impression as the reader that this scene is one in which

the body of Fanny can be seen through the wooden box and in this way Woolf achieves what Hardy asked for, that his reader bridge the gap between the writer's intent and textual actualisation. Fanny is an example of what Woolf refers to as:

Hardy's power – the true novelist's power – to make us believe that his characters are fellow-beings driven by their own passions and idiosyncrasies, while they have – and this is the poet's gift – something symbolical about them which is common to us all. ('The Novels' 5)

In this observation Woolf merges Hardy as a novelist and poet, resolving the tension of keeping the two separate entities. She concludes the essay by echoing this idea of 'vision', deciding that Hardy is a classic, a literary genius because 'it is no mere transcript of life at a certain time and place that Hardy has given us. It is a vision of the world and man's lot' ('The Novels' 9).

#### 4.5 Traces and absences

It is curious that there is no mention of Virginia Woolf in *Life and Work*. Was Hardy implying something about Woolf's work and her place in literary history by this absence? Was he writing her out of his history as she had publicly written him out of the literary scene? In *Life and Work* there are entries such as 'October 31. Henry Williamson, the author of *Tarka the Otter*, called' in 1927 (476), and 'Miss Amy Lowell the American poetess, who reminded him of her call at the beginning of the war – "two bedraggled ladies", herself and her friend' (420). Yet, despite Virginia Woolf visiting in a similar vein in 1926, there is no record of this particular afternoon in Hardy's autobiography. This absence is in contrast to quite frequent mentions of Sassoon in the later years of *Life and Work*. For instance, in an entry for July 1926 visits are recorded from '[Hardy's]

friends Siegfried Sassoon and Mr and Mrs John Masefield' (471-2). As a result, there lies a marked disparity between the life-writing of Hardy, where Woolf features only as a footnote to his friendship with her father, and that of Woolf, in which her visit to Max Gate takes up over six pages of her diary from 1926 and has been frequently documented and commented. Woolf's entry in March of the same year, is useful in understanding how she thought about her own private records:

But what is to become of all these diaries, I asked myself yesterday. If I died, what would Leo make of them? He would be disinclined to burn them; he could not publish them. Well, he should make up a book from them, I think and then burn the body. I daresay there is a little book in them; if the scraps and scratching were straightened out a little. (87-88)

Woolf was aware of weaving certain things into a narrative legacy. After her death, Leonard published *A Writer's Diary: Being Extracts from the Diary of Virginia Woolf* (1954), which included the visit to Hardy in full. Here was Woolf's chance to portray Hardy, and his wife, as characters through her own writing: she described him as 'a little puffy cheeked cheerful old man, with an atmosphere cheerful & businesslike in addressing us, rather like old doctors or solicitors, saying "Well now"' (96). However, despite the diary being under her narrative control, the reader senses that, ultimately, Hardy's real character alluded her; while Woolf was 'beset with the desire to hear him say something about his books', 'the dog kept cropping up' and he was not interested much in his novels, or in anybody's novels" (98).



#### 4.6 Ezra Pound and Hardy

Ezra Pound's own modernism might suggest a need to distance himself from Hardy, whose novels placed him firmly in the camp of what had come before. Bornstein argues that Pound perceived 'ideogrammic organisation of literary periods' (23) and so it would be understandable to simply place Hardy in the Victorian period and look to new writers to make up the modernist period. However, this was not the case. Just as with Woolf, Pound underwent a period of pushing against and away from Hardy before renegotiating sites of influence to include Hardy within his own literary narrative. Pound's correspondence with Hardy suggests a desire to place Hardy within the modernist movement, at least as a proto-modernist. This is significant given that Charles Lock (193) contends that Hardy has been written out of modernist history.

In *After Strange Gods* (1933), T. S. Eliot said of Hardy that he 'was indifferent even to the prescripts of good writing' (54). Eliot's principal criticism was that: 'What again and again introduces a note of falsity into Hardy's novels is that he will leave nothing to nature, but will always be giving one last turn of the screw himself' (56). Hardy came to fulfil a role for some modernist writers as a fixed point from which to move on from, and therefore a certain distance needed to be maintained. This approach was perhaps reflected in Eliot's decision not to write to Hardy. In contrast, Pound actively sought an epistolary connection with Hardy.

When considering Pound and Hardy, George Bornstein argues for a more co-operative model of influence than Bloom's anxiety theory (23). This is supported by Pound's early engagement with W.B. Yeats as an older poet who might be regarded as a paternal influence. What Pound found appealing was Yeats's ability to change and respond to new conditions of literary creation and reception. Pound's private correspondence reveals an open intent to position Yeats as one of his key influences: '[I] went to London because I thought Yeats knew more about poetry than anybody else' (*Selected Letters* 296, qtd. in Bornstein 24). Similarly, Hardy was a writer who could re-write poems that had their gestation in a Victorian age and make them speak to a modern audience. *Wessex Poems* appeared in 1898 but *Satires of Circumstance* and *Moments of Vision* appeared in the twentieth century and were specifically read by soldier poets during the war. Pound's appreciation that 'the artist is always beginning', as he stated in the essay, 'How I Began', would have lent itself to Hardy's literary situation. For Pound, Hardy could transcend boundaries and start anew as a contemporary poet.

Bornstein states that while Pound had a number of close personal friendships with other writers at various stages in his career, in other instances he maintained epistolary contact with writers whom he had not met, such as with Marianne Moore. Hardy was another case in point. Pound never met the older writer but his correspondence with him was rich and meaningful, not least because Hardy declared:

I am glad to get a letter from such an original thinker on poetry – and in poetry. I should add – as yourself: which very few people are nowadays, more's the pity. (28 November 1920, *CL6*: 47)

For both Woolf and Pound, the letters they received from Hardy held material importance. The physical existence of the letters meant that a tangible item could be stored in their own literary archives that made a connection to Hardy, thereby suggesting continuation of a literary canon through one writer and onto the other. When Patricia Hutchins interviewed Pound in the 1960s, he declared that Hardy's letter was one of the only items he took with him out of England (90).

Ezra Pound's first communication with Hardy was in his official capacity as foreign editor of *The Dial* in November 1920. As such he presents an assured self in epistolary form, writing with clarity and singularity of purpose. His typescript epistle to Hardy appeared on letter-headed paper which included a list of some thirty or more writers who had already been published within the periodical, along with the exclaimer: 'Will print during 1920 – 21 the inedited writing of REMY DE GOURMONT' (13 November 1920) (Figure 25a).

# THE DIAL.

*Edited by Scofield Thayer.*

152 W. 13th St. New York.

Will print during 1920-21 the  
inedited writings of

REMY DE GOURMONT;

and has already received either acceptable  
manuscript or promises of collaboration  
from

Julien Benda  
Marcel Proust  
Benedetto Croce  
Miguel Unamuno  
W. B. Yeats  
Paul Valery  
Ford Madox Hueffer  
T. S. Eliot  
James Joyce  
Wyndham Lewis  
Jean de Boschère  
Ezra Pound  
Guy Charles Cros  
Albert Mockel  
Andre Spire  
Paul Morand  
May Sinclair  
Louis Aragon  
Alexandre Arnoux  
Jean Giraudoux  
Fernand Divoire  
Richard Aldington  
Andre Salmon  
Philippe Soupault  
W. C. Williams  
Mina Loy  
O. W. de Lubiez Milosz  
Ludmila Savitzky  
Fritz Vanderpyl  
Arthur Symons  
Michael Arlen  
H. D.  
Shane Leslie  
Aldous Huxley  
Frederic Manning

For subscriptions, etc., refer to F. B. Neumayer, 70, Charing Cross Road, W.C. 2.  
2/6 one copy; yearly subscription 25/-

Agency—

5, HOLLAND PLACE CHAMBERS,

LONDON, W. 8.

Thomas Hardy : O.M.

Dear Mr Hardy :

I am sending you today  
the November issue of THE DIAL in the  
hope of convincing you that it is a  
suitable place for your work to appear,  
for America .

The company is at least as  
good as is to be found in any other  
current publication . The Gourmont and  
Morand are taken from mss. which have not  
yet been published in French.

I think also you will find  
our rates of payment as high as those  
of other periodicals . in any case it  
is quite easy for you or your agent  
to demand what you like.

Hoping , in my " official capacity"  
for the honour of your colaberation ; and  
asking as a private person that you  
accept an expression of my long-standing  
admiration of your poetry and of your  
prose , and in especial of the The Mayor  
Casterbridge and the Noble Dames ;

*believe me your sincere  
Ezra Pound*

T.O.

Fig. 25a. Letter from Ezra Pound to Hardy, (13 November 1920). Dorset County Museum, H.4814.

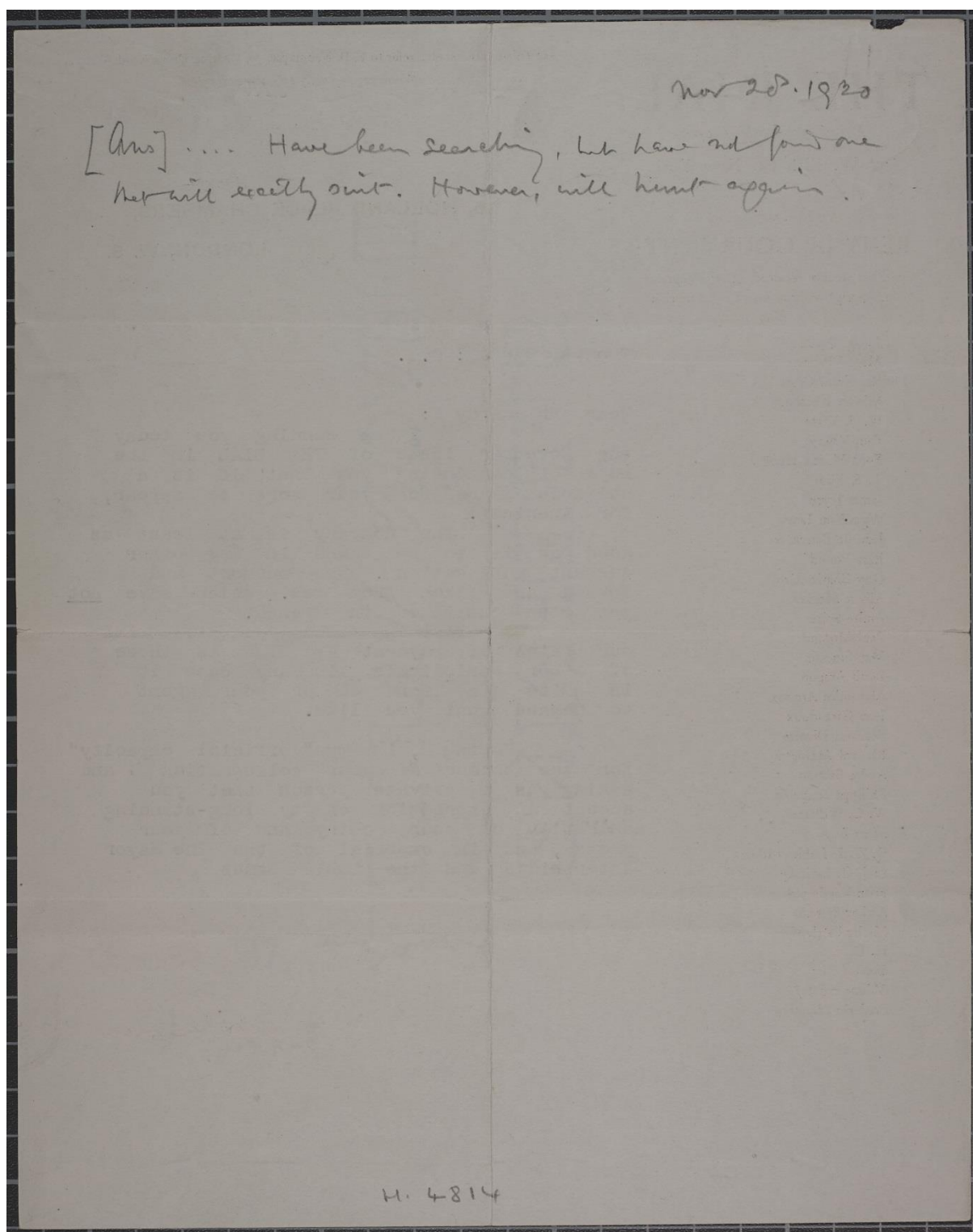


Fig. 25b. Hardy's pencil draft reply to Ezra Pound's letter (13 November 1920). Dorset County Museum, H.4814.

This document itself placed Hardy within a new tradition of writers. Initially his pencil draft reply to Pound's first letter was non-committal (Figure 25b):

Nov 20 1920

[ans.] .... Have been searching but have not found one that will exactly [fit]. However, will hunt again.

It was not until 1921 that Hardy decided on a poem that would fit the magazine's then reputation as an influential outlet for modernist literature. The poem he eventually submitted was 'Two Houses', which fittingly spoke of past and present existing in proximity.

Pound makes explicit reference to the professional nature of their correspondence in the final paragraph of his letter: 'Hoping, in my "official capacity" for the honour of your collaboration'; this is then qualified with a more personal request that 'as a private person you [...] accept an expression of my long-standing admiration of your poetry and of your prose, and in especial of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and the *Noble Dames*' (13 November 1920). How long-standing was this admiration though? Patricia Hutchins points out that in earlier public discourse, Pound had referred to Hardy as a novelist in a disparaging way, "as not of our age...remote from us and things familiarly under our hand" (253 qtd. in Hutchins 92). Pound's epistolary praise for Hardy's fiction, alongside a request for his poetry, suggests a conscious re-positioning of Hardy in relation to himself and the modernist tradition by the 1920s.

Pound's previous attitude to Hardy as 'not of our time' might also be seen in the dry comment he made to Amy Lowell in the briefest of epistles, a postcard sent in 1914 about plans for an imagist anthology: 'Congratulations. Why not include

Thomas Hardy?’ How was this to be read? Given his follow-up letter in which he criticised Lowell for ‘turning Les Imagistes into an uncritical democracy’ (*Selected Letters* 44), it seems unlikely. However, within his role as foreign editor in the 1920s Pound would have been aware that a contribution from Hardy would be mutually beneficial, giving the publication the gravitas of an established name among the plethora of new writers, just as Gourmont did posthumously, but also helping Hardy to be seen as a poet, in his own right. Pound makes clear that *The Dial* offers Hardy a place in the modern literary world:

I am sending you today the November issue of THE DIAL in the hope of convincing you that it is a suitable place for your work to appear. (13 November 1920)

This argument is reinforced in the magazine’s follow-up letter in June 1921, from the editor Scofield Thayer, who also uses the epistolary space to confer both professional and private admiration:

I am happy not only at being able to print a poem which will confer honour upon any journal in which it appeared whether or not it bore the name of Thomas Hardy [...] (8 June 1921)

In the words of a professional literary editor, Thayer places emphasis on strength of Hardy’s poetic material over his famous name as the reason for their delight in printing his work. Nevertheless, in the next paragraph Thayer repositions himself as a literary fan, as ‘one who has from childhood been a reader and admirer of yours’. Hardy is simultaneously predecessor and contemporary of the new literary world in this context. For an American market, Hardy’s Englishness was particularly desirable, as indicated by Thayer’s comment that the magazine’s printer, Bruce Rogers, had gone ‘directly to

Wessex' when he travelled to England 'to visit and relive what he had already known and experienced in your novels'. This participation in literary tourism indicated more of a continuation, rather than separation of Hardy as novelist and Hardy as poet. Pound also came to appreciate the importance of the continuation and connection between the two forms in Hardy's work, and in his processes of re-evaluation he later referred to 'the harvest of [Hardy] having written 20 novels first' (Pound 242, qtd. in Lock 452).

Pound established a more personal line of correspondence with Hardy from March 1921, when he wrote first from France, and then from Italy. These handwritten letters show a conscious awareness of self-presentation through written form. The distance between Hardy as Victorian and Pound as modernist is more marked in language and form, despite the fact that their epistolary conversations show a real meeting of minds. Pound's letter from France, for example, shows a fluidity of temporalities in the opening sentence: 'Of course your last note does not, did not require an answer' (March 1921). While the letter does end with 'sincerely yours' and his signature, Pound then carries on again on the fourth as if the conversation was still in flow: 'and also concede that I know how much right you have to your quiet' (Figure 26). This is not marked as a postscript. Pound's use of the letter form bends to something more spontaneous. Perhaps regarding letter-writing a Victorian ritual, Pound plays with the form's conventions, as he does with his modernist literary texts.



4.

And also concede that I know  
 how much right you have to your  
 quiet - and how little one ought  
 to break in upon it - and  
 in the end don't ~~answer~~ answer  
 this if the whole subject bores you  
 unspeakably.

contritely  
 E.P.

permanent address  
 5 Holland Place  
 Chambers  
 London  
 W.8

Fig. 26. Letter from Ezra Pound to Hardy (March 1921). Dorset County Museum (H.4816)

Within the letter Pound presents himself humbly, referring to his own work as ‘the wretched brochures’, hardly worthy of Hardy’s time, and goes on to say that he recognises that he has found ‘the stuff in question may have the supreme fault of being merely uninteresting’. There is deference to Hardy’s position as one of a ‘generation of elders’, and in relation to this Pound admits: ‘I was very much surprised that you had heard of me at all’. However, this is surely a shrewd self-presentation which achieves its aim of flattering Hardy into further advice and feedback. Pound states that ‘I don’t think mere praise is any good – I know where I can get it’, and asserts that in writing to Hardy he is making ‘a demand for more frankness’ (March 1921). Within an epistolary relationship Pound can cut across distance and difference to seek a level of honesty between two writers that he acknowledges would only normally appear in ‘lifelong friendship’. In this letter, he can be seen to be making a strong bond between Hardy and himself, desiring a paternal influence to be bestowed on him. Hardy responded accordingly, giving him honest opinions of his work.

In his follow-on letter at the end of the month, Pound again displayed a disregard for letter conventions, given that his address is only partial and scribbled, almost as an afterthought in the margins at the top: ‘St Raphael, 31 March’ (Figure 27). The opening of the text further denies its epistolary form as Pound records a seemingly disjointed note at the top of the document, prior to the obligatory salutation, making it more like a literary notebook than a letter:

“good”, “Bon” “Bon??”, or, very probably “[unclear word]” as Jacob said when the angel finally blessed him. (31 March 1921)

21? St Raphael.  
31 March

"good", "Bon", "Borb", or, very probably "Ugh"  
as Jacob said when the angel  
finally blessed him.

Dear Thomas Hardy:

It is very good  
of you to answer - and though you  
seem to think you have said little  
or nothing, you have really said a  
good deal & <sup>diagnosed</sup> ~~but~~ the trouble with  
nearly all art & literature of the past  
thirty years:

I ought - precisely - to have  
written "Propertius soliloquizes" -  
turning the readers attention to the  
reality of Propertius - but no -  
what I do is to borrow a term  
- aesthetic - a term of aesthetic

Fig. 27. Letter from Ezra Pound to Hardy (31 March 1921). Dorset County Museum archive (H.4817).

The text then reverts to type with a relatively formal salutation – ‘Dear Thomas Hardy’ – but after some introductory lines acknowledging Hardy’s previous correspondence, it reads very much as a rambling six-page record of Pound’s thoughts on his poetic work, almost a stream of consciousness expressing what appear to be his own anxieties of influence – a sense of a lack of originality, and concern over imitativeness – and not necessarily keeping in mind Hardy as the sole recipient at times:

I imitate Browning. At a tender age London critics scare me out [of] frank & transparent imitation

[...]

If – as in the case of the poem of Mauberly’s own ^ amorous adventure, I compress one Henry James novel into two pages – even unsuccessfully – I have the right to some of the attention that wd. have gone to the 298 pages omitted. (31 March 1921)

The letter becomes a justification, not only to Hardy but to the critics and to himself of his literary processes. The spontaneous style of the letter suggests a closer relationship between Hardy and Pound than the two writers would ever know, since they never met and did not even establish a long correspondence. That he wrote in this way to Hardy, as one of the ‘elders’, suggests a confidence that Hardy could receive and understand Pound’s message in the spirit in which he intended it.

This letter to Hardy can also be regarded as an early prototype of Pound’s later epistolary style, which became a more defined feature of his modernist persona from the 1930s onwards, when he was staying at Rapallo. A cursory glance through *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound* immediately offers up examples of his playful treatment of language systems, including his idiosyncratic spelling choices: ‘At last a guy with some brains is startin a maggaerzeen in Eng(of all

places)land'; 'J-J-J-Jayzus me daRRRlnt: The ribbon iz pale and the carbon brighter...' – this latter example taken from a letter to fellow modernist James Joyce on 8 December 1937 (300). In Pound's spirit of making it new, letters were transformed into modernist texts themselves. It would not be implausible, then, to assume that Pound expected his letters to be studied in the same way as his poems, and therefore for him to have knowingly communicated to Hardy in the way that he did for the eyes of a critical secondary audience.

When Hutchins interviewed Pound about Hardy in the 1960s, she recounts an occasion when Pound declared that on leaving England he had taken a letter of Thomas Hardy's as a keepsake but Pound denied it: 'Oh Hardy wouldn't have kept mine; not important enough. And I didn't keep letters in those days' (90). This seems disingenuous. Hardy did keep Pound's letters, as can now be seen in this exploration of the archive material. His preoccupation with his paper archives had been made evident when *Life and Work* was published, although we have no way of knowing if Pound read the biography. I argue that writing to Hardy was a conscious act and the record of their communication was one that Pound wanted to become public. Bornstein highlights how influential Pound was in weaving intricate networks between writers. In this context it is also possible to suggest that Pound wanted to have some control over Hardy's place in twentieth-century literary history by being the one to bring him into the modernist network. When he could not make Hardy fit, he re-shaped the narrative to place Hardy more explicitly as a source of influence. This is not to deny that Hardy's guidance and advice was valuable to Pound, and certainly their brief postal communication would have been a boost to him, coming as it did when he felt he no longer had a place in England. However, in writing Hardy

into his own history, Pound's narrative became retrospectively more defined. The most powerful and frequently quoted comment linking Pound and Hardy was Pound's assertion in a letter to W.H. Rouse, in 1934, that 'Nobody has taught me anything about writing since Hardy died' (30 December 1934, *Selected Letters* 264).

#### **4.7 Hardy and other younger writers: private support but public distance**

So far the focus of this chapter has been to examine how younger writers perceived Hardy in relation to themselves. But Hardy's perceptions of his role can also be explored through examining the letter archives. Hardy contributed to the new periodicals edited by the younger generation, he wrote encouraging letters when they sent him their books, and he was happy to participate as their contemporary. However, given the sheer volume of requests from aspiring writers, he drew the line at publicly lending his name to support their literary careers. This final section will examine this aspect of Hardy's connection to younger writers.

The wartime poet Muriel Stuart serves as an example of a younger writer who sought the public support of a member of the previous generation to make a name for herself. She first wrote to Hardy in March 1916, acknowledging herself as a 'perfect stranger' and Hardy as the 'Poet' (2 March 1916). As such her letter is no different from the fan mail I examine in chapter four. However, she also sent her first collection of poems and asked Hardy for advice and encouragement. As with so many of the letters Hardy received from the younger

generation, he replied personally and gave her poems the attention she had hoped for, while acknowledging that he read literary works slowly and could not read a whole collection. He replied that 'some of your poems [are] distinctly promising' but also warned her that there was 'nothing to be made in a worldly sense' and advised her to treat it as 'a luxury of your spare time'. While this reply might suggest a gender bias, I argue that Hardy perceived all younger writers, male and female, as equal to his younger self. He consistently reported that he had had to write novels to gain financial security, and only published his poetry when he was no longer dependent on payment. As a result, his advice to Stuart, and other aspiring writers was in line with his own experience.

Stuart continued to make a name for herself in literary circles, and in June 1924 she wrote to Hardy again, this time to request a foreword to what she deemed her best poetical work:

It has always been my desire that one of my books should have a few words from you, but until I could collect my best, though it be a very poor best, I could not ask you to do so. Even now, it is a very poor head for such a laurel but I do want it very much. (2 June 1924)

A foreword by a revered man of letters would have not only elevated Muriel Stuart's own status in the literary world but also boosted sales. But Stuart was not successful in her plan. Hardy's reply came via Florence, writing on behalf of her husband, 'who cannot get through his correspondence by himself'. This had a distancing effect as the epistolary relationship Stuart had previously sought to establish with Hardy was disrupted. Florence wrote:

He would [...] like to write the prefatory words to your collected poems that you suggest but fears it is beyond him to do it. And even if he were

not overburdened by what he is compelled to do there is always the difficulty that having refused to do the same thing for so many friends he offends them by doing it any special case, and also brings down upon himself a swarm of other applications. (June 1924)

If Stuart had hoped to mark herself publicly as one of Hardy's protégées, then her attempt had failed. Nevertheless, in private Hardy appears to have provided her with support and so it can be argued that he held a perception of himself as mentor, but without adopting this as a public face. For instance, in Stuart's letter she indicated that Hardy had provided advice and encouragement not only through prior correspondence but also in the form of 'messages that Mrs Hardy was kind enough to give me one night at the P.E.N. Club [which] made me very grateful and happy' (2 June 1924). Hardy's membership within the P.E.N Club – 'Poets, Essayists, Novelists' – can be seen as one way in which he actively supported a new community of writers without giving special attention to individuals. P.E.N. was founded by the British poet, playwright and peace activist, Catharine Amy Dawson, in 1921 as a way of uniting writers after World War One. Initially, it was a dinner club that enabled writers to share ideas, but it became the first worldwide association of writers who viewed 'freedom of expression and literature as inseparable' ('PEN International' n. pag.) and is now recognised as an important platform to advocate human rights on an international level.<sup>54</sup> However, despite Hardy's involvement in the Club, when individual writers came up against the moral restrictions of their society, it seems Hardy declined to personally fight their cause.

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<sup>54</sup> See <http://www.pen-international.org/our-history/>.



The writer and sex education reformer Marie Stopes wrote to Hardy at a time when her plays were not getting passed by the theatre censor; presumably she reached out to Hardy because he was a writer who had expressed ideas that resonated with her own. Stopes first wrote to Hardy in 1923 when she purchased a disused lighthouse and cottage in Portland Bill, made famous in Hardy's *The Well-Beloved*. This was a significant act of preservation which bolstered the concept of Wessex as a literary tourist destination. Hardy visited the lighthouse later that summer and the two writers developed a friendly acquaintance. However, when Stopes then renewed their correspondence in April 1926, to ask for Hardy's public support, she came up against an unexpected problem – Hardy was not convinced by her play's premise. Stopes had openly declared in the first sentence that 'My last two plays have been banned by the censor and I am heartbroken', suggesting that she was comfortable sharing her situation with Hardy as a known interlocutor. Consciously positioning herself below Hardy, Stopes asked him if he would write in support of her work: 'from the stronghold of your greatness, lean down to help me' (14 April 1926).

Following the publication of the sex-education manual *Married Love* in 1918, Stopes produced the play *Vectia* to pursue the issue of women's sexual ignorance. However, Stopes came up against censorship restrictions. When she published the play in 1926 it was under the title *A Banned Play and a Preface on Censorship*. That Stopes sought written support from Hardy suggests that she perceived her predecessor as a writer who understood the need to push at moral boundaries. This belief can be understood in the context of Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and his contribution to the *New Review's*

sex education symposium entitled the 'Tree of Knowledge' (1894).<sup>55</sup> However, Hardy's response was not what Stopes might have hoped it would be. Referring to Vectia's confusion as to why she has not become pregnant, despite being with her husband for three years, Hardy wrote:

I cannot conceive a young woman not an imbecile who has been married three years being in such crass ignorance of physiology [...]. If she had been married only three days, or even three months, it would not have thrown such a strain upon one's credulity. (16 April 1926 CL7: 16)

Hardy's comments refer to the central character, Vectia, who due to her lack of sexual knowledge does not know that her husband is impotent; as she starts to understand her position, Vectia undertakes her own sex education by reading relevant texts in the British Library, including the work of Stopes:

William: What's the meaning of all this beastliness? Ellis' Sex Psychology! Stopes, Married Love! Stopes, Radiant Motherhood! Robie's Sex Ethics! Ellis's Sex Psychology, volume 2, volume 3, volume 4! (*Banned* 84).

However, despite these intertextual references, Hardy seems to have been unaware that the play was largely autobiographical, based on the writer's own such experiences after three years of marriage. Turning to the practical element of Stopes' request, Hardy also removed himself as a possible protector by arguing that 'a play acts so differently from how it reads that I can express no opinion on the censor's refusal to licence' (16 April 1926, CL 7: 17).

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<sup>55</sup> For discussion of this piece see Angelique Richardson's *Love and eugenics in the late nineteenth century: rational reproduction and the new woman*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

In this instance, a greater closeness developed between Stopes and Hardy's wife, Florence. By the September of the same year the two were corresponding, with Florence writing to thank Stopes for some family planning pamphlets:

It was good of you to send them, & I have read them with great interest. I have tried to interest my husband also, but I feel that now he is of an age when interests are few. He is absorbed in his own special work, the writing of poetry, & I think that now he does not give much thought to social problems. (14 September 1926)

Given Hardy's ongoing investment in politics and animal welfare through the 1920s, Florence's remark that her husband was no longer interested in social problems seems odd, but as a personal and private letter her words are perhaps unreliable. It may have been an excuse for her husband, a way to protect him from unmanageable demands, or a way to open up a space for herself in such discussions.

This is one of several occasions in which Florence became not only a conduit for Hardy's support of younger, female writers, but also an independent advocate, despite her own failed writing ambitions. For instance, Florence appears to have also nurtured the literary talents of both Charlotte Mew and Hardy's secretary, May O'Rourke. As Hardy's secretary, O'Rourke found herself immersed in a literary scene that included visits from newly established male poets, such as Siegfried Sassoon and Edmund Blunden. Her diaries, which have survived within the Hardy archive, record her perceptions of these experiences:

E.B. is rather a saint, I imagine: he looks too awfully like a poet – wild, homely-coloured hair, angelic blue eyes and a sweet little elfin face[.]

Siegfried Sassoon is – Siegfried Sassoon! The camera flatters him: he is not handsome in the starry way that the portrait I know shows him. (30 July 1923)

However, unlike Sassoon and Blunden, or the leading female poets of the time, including Charlotte Mew and Amy Lowell, O'Rourke was a relatively unknown poet. Her position as secretary enabled her to experience something of a literary life but it was a vicarious experience.

A birthday letter sent from O'Rourke to Hardy in June 1926 documents the intimacy she enjoyed with both Hardy and his wife:

This is my third year with you, and dear Mrs Hardy, and Wessie, and I can frame no better wish than that the years ahead will make you as happy as my three years at Max Gate have made me. (2 June 1926)

This paints an almost familial image and emphasises the importance of O'Rourke's proximity to Hardy, with the additional 'Thank you for all your kindness' suggesting that he has been a mentor and benefactor to her. However, her diaries suggest that while there was a closeness between writer and secretary, O'Rourke's literary connections with Hardy were mediated by Florence, as in this example from her diary of 19 December 1923:

F.E.H. told me yesterday that I must on no account give up writing as T.H. thought a lot of my work. (He does not expect me to make money by it – whoever did?) but [...] I shall wear my poverty with an air. (19 December 1923)

O'Rourke's diaries shed light on Florence's role in encouraging younger female writers who hoped to benefit from proximity to Hardy:

Yesterday I went to see F.E.H. and had a chat with her. She was amazingly kind and understanding. I feel that she will help me to [unclear word] away and to get a post somewhere – my keenest wish. No: not quite! My keenest wish now is to [unclear word] a place in Literature. Until this year I did not [wish] a high place. You will please notice: only the place that I have earned... All I want is a place.

Given the form and privacy of diary-writing, these entries reveal evidence of inner conflicts that O'Rourke would have been unable to voice within her social environment. Her genuine desires emerge beneath socially acceptable responses, for example when she corrects her initial assertion that finding a position somewhere is her 'keenest wish', and then admits that what she craves is a place in the literary landscape of the twentieth century. In contrast, in published discourses, O'Rourke's name only exists within a few collections of women's poetry and her work is not critically valued. In *Women's Poetry of the First World War*, Nosheen Khan argues that O'Rourke's poem 'The Minority' (1917), about prostitution during the war years, (1917) 'does not rise above the level of jingoistic moralising' (143):

Her youth from Hell – now see her as she preens  
Bright thro' the weary days,

Tinkling her silly mirth against the dread  
Calm of those lives who listen for dear feet  
That will not come again. –

Ah! Fool! You tread  
No mere commercial street,  
But ground made consecrate by their spilt lives (ll. 8-15, qtd. in Khan143)

Nevertheless, along with the support of Florence, and the inspiring environment of Max Gate – which allowed O'Rourke to compose poems on the Hardys' typewriter – O'Rourke did garner some support at the time from other female

writers. Within O'Rourke's papers is a typescript of a review of her collection *West Wind Days*, written by Alice Meynell for the *Dublin Review*. It is a positive avowal of O'Rourke's work and allows her a position within literary history:

Her poems take their place among the finest of the unquestionably fine group of recent war-poems. (n. pag.)

Another review by Katharine Tynan in 1919 for *America* indicated that O'Rourke's work was on par with that of Meynell's. These typescript copies of reviews, along with O'Rourke's diaries and numerous unstudied poems, have survived because of their connection to Hardy, but they also form the biography of an aspiring female writer in the 1920s who would otherwise have been largely left out of literary history.

The interplay between unpublished material from the archives and public commentary has enabled examination of how Hardy was perceived by the younger generation in this chapter. The results are complex, suggesting that anxiety over their own originality was a factor for some younger writers, while others sought to establish an explicit connection of paternalism between Hardy and themselves. He was viewed as a contemporary but his successes in the previous century meant that he was also someone who was given an elevated, and therefore slightly removed position, in the modern world.

## 5. Through the letter box: a study of Hardy's fan mail

The expression of thanks to you must be similar to that tendered to a great surgeon by a patient, whose life he has saved under the influence of anaesthetics.

(Frank Theodore to Thomas Hardy, 19 February 1915)

The final two chapters in this thesis move away from analysis of familiar correspondence between Hardy and close acquaintances to take stock of the figure of the fan within the letter collection. In doing so I respond to David M. Henkin's call for a conscious awareness of the way in which a nostalgia for epistolary writing tends to historicise 'the act of correspondence [as] holographic manuscript letters exchanged between individuals who already enjoy a deep personal acquaintanceship' (63). In practice, the majority of nineteenth-century mail was likely to have been 'unsolicited postings to strangers' (65). Weber and Weber's *Descriptive Checklist* contains frequent entries in which an unfamiliar correspondent is listed as having sent a letter of appreciation, which in itself demonstrates Hardy's growing status as a celebrity, particularly in the 1890s and beyond. Appreciation letters situate Hardy as an author within a period when the cultural phenomenon of modern celebrity was developing through the spread of mass media and new technology – a development that Graeme Turner suggests was witnessed from around 1895 to the 1920s. The emergence of a more active fan culture during this period forms the focus of this chapter. Acknowledging the multiplicity of factors that played a part in establishing the celebrity culture as we recognise it today, I emphasise the important role that affordable post played in the development of concepts of

nineteenth-century celebrity. I argue that postal accessibility added a new layer of intimacy to author-reader relationships and offered a more creative role for the fan. The chapter also shows how these letters contribute to our understanding of the public perception of Hardy and the place of the writer more generally in both British and international culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Controversy over *Tess* elevated Hardy to a far greater level of fame than he had previously known, as indicated in *Life and Work*:

Moreover, the repute of the book was spreading, not only through England, and America, and the Colonies, but through the European Continent and Asia; and during this year [1892] translations appeared in various languages, its publication in Russia exciting great interest. On the other hand some local libraries in English-speaking countries “suppressed” the novel – with what effect was not ascertained. (259)

Following on from this, there was a flurry of excitement when *Jude the Obscure* was published in November 1895 and twenty thousand copies of this novel were sold in the first four months. The spread of Hardy’s writing across the world from that point onward can be traced through the global fan mail he received – including correspondence from Australia, Canada, Chile, China, Egypt, France, Germany, India, Ireland, Japan, New Zealand, Nigeria, the Philippines, South Africa, Syria, Tasmania and the USA. There were numerous translations of Hardy’s work, as well as cheaper editions and, by 1916, a film adaptation of *Far from the Madding Crowd*. By the 1920s he was receiving an overwhelming amount of correspondence from admirers, as indicated in a typical letter written by his second wife, Florence, in 1922, in which she explains ‘I write for Mr Hardy whose correspondence is more than he can cope with at his advanced age’ (20 July 1922, CL 6:149). Weber and Weber provide the



following totals for the numbers of letters Hardy preserved in each decade from the 1860s to the 1920s (12):

<b>Decade</b>	<b>No. of letters in the archive</b>
1860	18
1870	119
1880	238
1890	293
1900	419
1910	994
1920	2104

These figures only tell us how many letters Hardy decided to retain at each stage of his life and career. However, that the number triples between the 1890s and 1910s, and then that figure more than doubles in the 1920s, reflects the increasing attention Hardy experienced as a famous author after *Tess* and *Jude*.

The term 'fan' might seem anachronistic and certainly it is not a word used in the letters in this collection but, the noun originated in the late seventeenth century as a clipped form of a religious 'fanatic' and by the nineteenth century entries in the *OED* show how application had spread to other cultural spheres, namely the realm of sport, by 1899. Besides which, even if, according to etymological history, the term had not reached the domain of literary appreciation by Hardy's time, certain behaviours can emerge before a suitable

label is brought into common usage, as Mark Duffett points out in his research into the origins of fan culture. Situating this within the discipline of Victorian literary studies, Anne-Marie Millim argues that fan culture should be seen 'as a fundamental part of the Victorian culture of collecting' (139). Evidence of collecting and obsessing behaviours documented within letters from Hardy's readers justifies use of the label 'fan' in this context.

The increase in print culture in the later nineteenth century gave greater access to personal details of famous writers' lives and provided items to collect in the form of personal ephemera, which included cartes de visite, press cuttings, interviews, photographs and autographs. As their price came down, books too became objects that could be curated, as is evident in a letter from 'an ex-elementary schoolteacher' Gertrude Trewern, writing from Penzance (or 'Outer Wessex', as she acknowledges) in 1924. She describes how Hardy's novels were given as birthday presents in her family 'until at last we had almost a complete set, and my brother made a special bookshelf for them' (11 July 1924). Similarly, another of Hardy's unfamiliar correspondents identified himself as 'an ardent collector of literary autographs' in his letter of 1927, requesting Hardy's signature to add to his collection (Feith, 11 February 1927). Given the date, one year before Hardy's death, it is unsurprising that a pencil note at the top of this letter marks it as 'unanswered', but in earlier years Hardy appears to have sent out hundreds of autograph slips to readers and admirers, before deciding to adopt strategies to evade the so-called 'autograph-hunters' – namely replying via his secretary, May O'Rourke, so that his letters did not become commodities with monetary value. Another collector, Daphne Banks, who lived in East Dorset, in the market town of Wimborne, wrote of her earnest

endeavour to place Hardy's autograph in a large collection of the signatures of 'famous men' as 'we are so proud of you belonging to our country' (25 August 1917). She wrote again in 1923 requesting permission to visit. While the cult of celebrity existed by the middle of the nineteenth century, established by the actions of admirers who nurtured a fascination with literary and political figures, by the end of the century there was a significant shift in the dynamics of fan-celebrity relationships; this letter captures how the writer became showcased as a symbol of national pride and subsumed within a process of cultural commodification at this time. Hardy's critical response to this process is evident in the satirical tone he adopts in an undated letter in response to what appears to be a request for a supply of autographs:

Persevering Sir,

When I have a spare month or six weeks in which to write out the documents you require I will not fail to send them. The autographs are less formidable, & here follows one.

Thomas Hardy,

again —

Thomas Hardy.

again again!

Thomas Hardy. (n.d. c.1883?, *CL* 7:166-7)

This appears in the seventh volume of the *Collected Letters* as an additional letter that came to light after publication of the first six volumes. There is no evidence as to who the correspondent was.

The persistent presence of the autograph hunter by the end of the century is explored in Henry James's short story 'Death of the Lion', which first appeared in the *Yellow Book* in 1894. Just as the fictional writer Paraday is hunted by a

female collector, letters to Hardy document how he was placed alongside other esteemed writers of his time as a name and a face in collectors' annuals.

Edward W. Bok, for instance, communicates a subtle pressure by indicating that there is a space 'long reserved for you [in my album]' and requesting a signed letter to fill the gap (15 October 1883). This letter arrived in 1883, at a time when Hardy's position as a writer was not so clearly established and he was more aware of the need to cultivate his public image through communication with the press and his readers. But if he did give in to this request, there is no record. Hardy's only act of liberty would have been not to reply, as any response risked becoming a commodity.

### **5.1 The 'age of the interview'**

Henry James referred to the 1890s as 'the age of interviewing' in which authors found themselves hounded by the press to give details of their personal lives.

What James and Hardy both objected to was the custom of going 'behind a book and review[ing] the man' (22 October 1900, *CL* 3: 269). Given that interviews and articles in the newspapers likely drove the desire for fans to know their idols on an intimate level, this offers a still more intrusive perspective on the sending of fan mail. Living through so many technological changes, Hardy can be viewed as one of the first writers to experience a clamour to achieve the most 'radical apprehension[s] of intimacy' (Salmon 169) which formed the cult of the celebrity as we know it today. However, while there has been scholarly interest in the impact of interviews and colour photographs of famous figures in early twentieth-century culture, less attention has been paid to

the fan mail which sought to simulate the supposed intimacy afforded to journalists and photographers.

Admittedly, at an earlier stage in his career Hardy appears to have sought greater publicity, for instance by featuring in one of a running cycle of 'Celebrities at Home' articles that appeared in *The World* in February 1886. For James Gibson, the writing style and content suggest that Hardy may have partially or entirely written the article himself, supported by evidence of Hardy's friendship with the journal's editor Edmund Yates and the fact that several passages from the article were used in Florence Dugdale's introduction to *The Early Life*; but for the reader the impression is that Hardy had opened up his home to the press (19). This feature piece followed the conventions of the newly-established genre by detailing the exterior and surrounding topography before taking the reader inside for a voyeuristic experience of sitting with Hardy:

Country-folk who, shortly after sunrise, plod along the narrow lanes stretching to the east of Dorchester, have their eyes frequently attracted by a crimson spot high on a distant ridge of landscape [...] there are few who do not know it to be the residence of Mr Thomas Hardy, the novelist.  
(6)

The opening evokes the characters and setting of Hardy's novels and encourages the reader to situate Hardy's home within his fiction. As the piece progresses, the inclusive language and use of present tense register allow the reader to participate in the visit:

Mr Hardy's writing-room is up-stairs, and to reach the door we pass under a small archway at the end of the landing. Behind the arch is a slyly-contrived passage and steep staircase, closed by a sliding-door. The species of adit affords, if necessary, a way of escape to one who is not a society man, when he is likely to be invaded from the front stairs.  
(7)

The detail of a secret passageway emphasises the privileged access afforded to the journalist, and his readers, but is contradictory in that a comment on the invasion of privacy appears within the very article that contributed to and encouraged such intrusion. Voyeuristic appeal is then heightened when the focus turns to the author's inner sanctum:

We enter the writing-room [...] and there rises from a writing-table to meet us a somewhat fair-complexioned man, a trifle below the middle height, of slight build, with a pleasant, thoughtful face [...] a man readily sociable and genial, but one whose mien conveys the impression that the world in his eyes has rather more of the tragedy than the comedy about it [...] (7)

Providing a visual description, the article encouraged the reader to feel acquainted with the author, which is typically heightened by inclusion of photographs – offering additional material for collection and curation. The piece concludes by blending fact and fiction, adopting a literary style, which not only highlights the journalist's knowledge but also encourages literary tourism by suggesting that Hardy's characters are visible in the real Wessex:

So we take leave, and pass down the hidden line of headless soldiers of the Empire, whose shadowy forms come mingling in our mind-sight with the familiar shapes of Bathsheba shouldering reed-sheaves, and Gabriel Oak thatching ricks, like those in the field before us. (8)

This article also made public Hardy's address as the subtitle was: 'Mr Thomas Hardy at Max Gate, Dorchester'. Appearing just a few months after Hardy and Emma moved into their new home, the article provided any keen fans with the address to either engage in correspondence or even travel to, in the hope of spotting the author. Despite the journalist's acknowledgment that Max Gate was a place that sought to provide privacy to a celebrated author, the opposite was ensured. However, if, as Gibson contends, Hardy had a hand in writing this

early article, it suggests that he was initially ambivalent about the new trend in home interviewing.

Richard Salmon notes that the end of the nineteenth century was a time when the journalistic interview was still in its early form and conventions were only beginning to be established.<sup>56</sup> It was a shock to many interviewees to discover that strangers would ask 'questions which one's most intimate friend would hesitate to ask' (Broome 473, qtd. in Salmon 161). Many of the fan letters to Hardy appear to have been directly influenced by the personal style of celebrity interviews. The blurring of lines between professional and private, stranger and friend, must have given readers unspoken license to ask their own probing questions within the letter space. For example, the following letter was sent from Francois Talva in France in 1925:

Dear Sir,

I have just been reading the account of the interview you had with Mr Lefevne [...] is it not delightful the way the English have of welcoming their guests!

(21 February 1925)

By the end of his epistle, Talva makes it clear that the suggested intimacy of the interview at Hardy's home has increased his desire to participate in a similar way:

Now, do you think it would be quite impossible for a young man – in spite of his being a foreigner – to have either a few words with a signature or a visiting card or anything else, from the novelist he likes best – though this

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<sup>56</sup> The verb form 'to interview' was first recorded in the OED in 1869.

novelist is an Englishman! I should be so pleased and proud! (21 February 1925)

The excitement of collecting souvenirs and ephemera is wrapped up in notions of illicit action.

Postal activity can be placed alongside collecting behaviour as a possible cause of the cult of celebrity that emerged out of the Victorian period. The ability to link a famous name to a postal address emerged as an indirect result of the postal reforms in Britain in 1840 and America in 1845. Henkin shows that changes in the postal network during the latter part of the century developed ‘far greater geographical specificity’, with postal addresses becoming attached to individual residences (67). This change offered a democratised system in which anyone was eligible to communicate with a name they might only know through print culture at the cost of a stamp. The World Postal Union (1874) then made fan-to-celebrity correspondence a global activity. The following fan letter, written in 1923, demonstrates this new level of accessibility; it makes direct reference to how the correspondent found Hardy’s address printed in an article:

Dear Sir,

Having seen your address recently in “The Daily Sketch”, I have decided to write to tell you of the very great pleasure I have derived from reading your works. (Elven, 23 July 1923)

The provision of a home address gives implicit license for the reader to make contact. Another admirer, writing from Cairo, refers to the delight in seeing Hardy’s Max Gate address in the *Daily Mail* newspaper while reading *A Group of Noble Dames* in 1911 (Valaskaki, 11 September 1911). By contrast, other letters took more circuitous routes via the London clubs that Hardy was associated with, such as Apollo Valakiss’s letter addressed to Hardy care of the Athenaeum Club in 1925 (8 June 1925) and another letter in the archive (Figure



28) which demonstrates how even the vaguest details could be used to ensure that a missive successfully reached its intended recipient if that person was of national interest. Despite the fact it was posted in 1922, long after the development of individual postal addresses, the envelope retains elements of an earlier method in which the person was linked only to a town or city.



Fig. 28. Envelope of a letter from Karl Wahle, 22 March 1922, Dorset County Museum archive, H.5752.

Sent from Austria, the envelope suggests that the sender assumed any prominent literary man would be based in London as the country's epicentre of culture. Henkin refers to early envelopes containing descriptions of the intended recipient, in order to distinguish people with the same or similar names. Here, the use of the epithet 'greatest living English novelist' seems to operate in the same way, as well as indicating to Hardy that the epistle was from an unknown admirer. There is evidence of at least two other hands, besides that of the original sender, on this envelope, telling the narrative behind its successful delivery to Hardy's home. A correction in blue pencil suggests 'Try Garrick Club S.W.L.' and once directed there a further correction is printed: 'Max Gate,' Dorchester. That this letter did not end up in the Dead Letter Office, or returned to sender, was owing to the cultural value instilled in the name Thomas Hardy.

The accessibility of communicating with an author through the postal system changed concepts of fan behaviour, moving the admirer closer to his or her target of attention. Since fans desire 'gradual penetration into the [writer's] consciousness and, subsequently, his domestic sphere', letter-writing offered a very tangible way in which a parasocial relationship between reader and author could be actualised (Millim 140). In some ways this notion was co-constructed by Hardy, as one correspondent highlighted when writing to him in 1923:

In the preface to 'Tess' years ago, you spoke of your regret at being unable to meet your readers personally and were I not convinced that so kindly an interest in them is still maintained, I would not venture to write.  
(Browne, 8 May 1923)

Hardy did not reply to this letter, suggesting that, for the writer, such a relationship was preferable as an imagined connection but for the reader there was a desire to actualise feelings of intimacy.

Hardy also declined many interviews from 1890 onwards. The publication of William Archer's *Real Conversations* in 1903 was a noted exception and, as its title suggests, this attempted to capture genuine instances of conversation with the author, rather than a probing interview. Even when the BBC was established in 1923 and asked Hardy to speak on its opening night, he gave his excuses on grounds of age and 'weakness of voice' (1 October 1923). A year later the BBC asked again if Hardy would speak a few words before *Tess* was performed by the Dorset Players:

The number of listeners in Great Britain is already over two million, and our new high power station is heard regularly over most of Europe. It would therefore not only be a privilege to Britishers, but to those neighbouring countries if they were able to hear your voice. (12 July 1924)

Again Hardy declined, stating that 'weakness of voice would make me inaudible'. It must have been a great frustration to the BBC given the global interest in the author, but refusing to engage with the latest technological development, and leaving no recording of his voice as a result, was perhaps Hardy's only way of preserving something of himself from the public need for consumption.

Hardy was only too aware that avoiding interviews did not stop the stream of personal information printed in the papers, as revealed in a letter to Captain John Acland, then curator of Dorset County Museum, in 1926. Hardy felt compelled to request that 'the attendant Kirby' be cautioned 'against letting strangers who visit the Museum draw from him any personal particulars about myself' (3 June 1926). In this letter Hardy is at pains to emphasise that it is not

a personal criticism against the attendant, but rather a necessary reaction to the celebrity culture that he found himself immersed in:

[G]ossiping journalists in England and America print all sorts of rubbish, mostly false, that they were told by “the porter at the Museum”, as they state, though no doubt they exaggerate what he really may have said under pressure of their questions in their eagerness for news, which is of course, money to them. (3 June 1926)

When he married Florence Dugdale in 1914 he was also unable to prevent media attention, and in his letter to Florence Henniker, – first quoted in chapter two – Hardy apologised that she had found out about his wedding through the papers:

Wednesday. 11:2:14

My dear friend:

I wanted to tell you by letter before you could have learnt it from the papers that Florence Dugdale and I were married yesterday at Enfield. But somehow, although nobody seemed to know anything of it, the news was telephoned to London immediately. If I had foreseen this I would have written beforehand to you, my best friend. (11 February 1914, *CL* 5: 10)

The contrast of news shared within familiar correspondence to a close friend and the speed at which the public story was communicated by telephone that morning, aptly captures the new world of celebrity in which every avenue of access was exploited. Only a few months before, in December 1913, Hardy had written to Henniker about ‘a young lady’ coming to take colour photographs of him, adding that ‘the specimens she showed me were extraordinary in their reality. But I am getting tired of it all’ (21 December 1913, *CL* 4: 330). Having experienced a period of over twenty years of intense scrutiny, Hardy’s confession to a friend that he was ‘getting tired of it all’ reveals how exhausting he found the process of sharing himself with the public.

Salmon argues that 'interviews persistently evoked and encouraged fantasies of illicit intrusion and surveillance' (161). Many of the fan letters show how these fantasies were acted out. One particular admirer wrote on 21 July 1925 to confess that 'I owe you an apology for intruding into your garden three weeks ago'; having passed undetected in this illicit act, the correspondent, William Blatchford, seeks to expose what he acknowledges as his 'bad behaviour' in order to legitimise it. The language of his letter conveys the enjoyment and excitement evoked by his acts of surveillance in which he 'peeped in at the gate', 'spoke to one of your maids', 'peep[ed] a little further inside and saw a man working in the garden'. The aura of the celebrity, paradoxically created by the very news coverage that sought to expose every aspect of an individual's personal life, drives the fanatical behaviour of those readers who seek intrusive acts of intimacy:

Surely you must realise how fascinating, how tantalising it was, as I stood at your gate, to think that only a few yards, and the wall of a house, separated me [from] all that means so much to me. (21 July 1925)

Caught between a moral consciousness that such behaviour is 'a nuisance' and an awareness that Hardy might think him 'a little mad' or 'eccentric', the letter also includes justificatory assertions that this is 'one of the penalties of being famous' (21 July 1925). This attitude was indicative of a new dynamic of reader and author in a world mediated by the press.

A letter sent from 'a college girl admirer' in Oklahoma in 1923, addressed to 'my favourite author', reveals a combination of knowledge gained from media coverage and more scholarly study. The sender, Miss Verne Tewksbury, states

that she recently wrote a 'fifty-page paper' on Hardy, but also seems fascinated by his marriage to Florence Hardy (23 March 1923). At one point in the letter, she breaks her constructed dialogue with Hardy and addresses Florence directly: 'Mrs Hardy, I find that you are a writer of children's stories. How wonderful that you two have interests along the same lines' (23 March 1923). The employment of a familiar discourse elides the public means by which she gained this knowledge, creating pseudo intimacy.

Salmon asserts that the domestic image of the author was central to the particular concept of celebrity that was being cultivated by the end of the nineteenth century (164). Typically, but not exclusively, male writers were featured in home-based interviews; as a result, the representation was one of the successful man who owned a desirable property. Ownership and possession being the focus, attention was naturally drawn to what the writer had on display in his study. For instance, when the *Black and White Review* published a piece on Hardy following the publication of *Tess* it was accompanied by a detailed sketch of the author in his second study (Figure 29). By this point it was a convention in the 'interview at home' genre to list each object observable by the journalist in the writer's inner sanctum. Evoking intimacy through a detailed catalogue of all the writer's tools offered the reader a way to feel they were ensconced in the home of their favourite literary celebrity at the same time as making a public exhibition of a typical domestic study. In James's 'The Death of the Lion' the only manuscript copy of Paraday's new novel becomes a fetishized object, passed around by unsympathetic admirers and eventually lost. James's narrative points to the materiality of the manuscript as a symbol of literary genius imbued with greater value than the

words or ideas contained within its pages. Similarly, I argue that this symbolic significance would be concentrated in a letter sent to a literary celebrity. As the object itself would pass through the letterbox into the private space of the study and into the hands of a favoured author, it must have generated a frisson of fetishized excitement through the simulation of intimacy imagined by this action. Perhaps as a result, it was less significant whether the writer in question replied or not. To imagine the author reading the letter and the correspondent's words entering his mind, must have been gratifying enough.

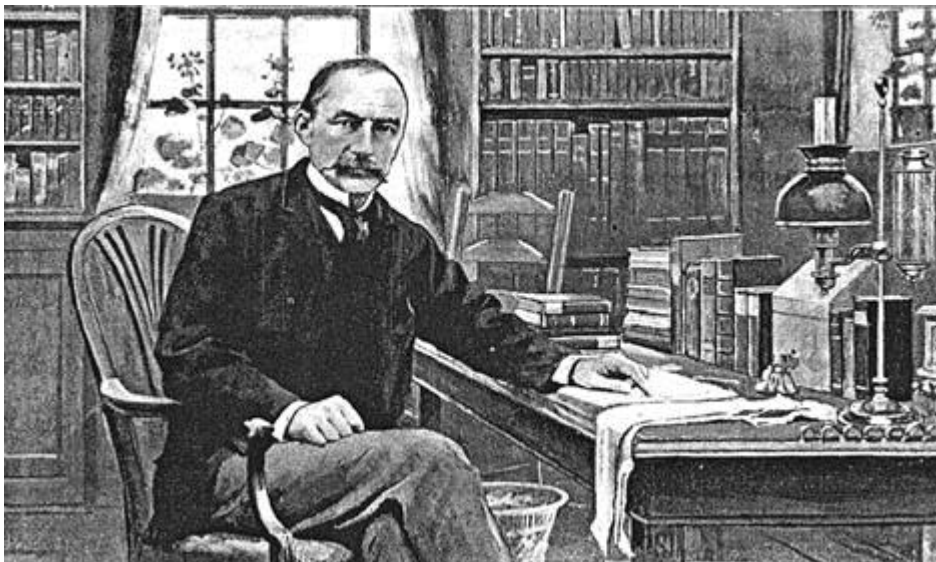


Fig. 29. Illustration in the *Black and White Review*, 1886.

## 5.2 The fan as the 'self-made reader'

In some instances, though, Hardy did engage with his readers as correspondents, typically when asked a specific question about his work. One example of a query-based fan letter came from F. H. Heidbrink writing from New York in 1900:

In *The Return of the Native*, Clym sings a French song beginning "Le point du jour": I should like to know the source of this poem. I have made

a translation of it, a copy of which I am enclosing in the hope that it might be of some slight interest to you. (n.d. 1900)

As this was not a personal question, Hardy diligently replied, directing his reader to the original poem by C. G. Etienne. As part of a reading experience that was specific to the cultural conditions of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, letter-writing served as a direct point of connection between reader and author in a similar way to the online fan communities that communicate with celebrities through Twitter in today's culture. Dialogue with a living author made visible the reader in the process, and enabled individuals to explore precise lines of interest to extend their own personal reading experience. In offering a translation of Clym's song, Heidbrink sought also to become a collaborator, rather than remain a mere recipient of Hardy's work.

Richard Altick argues that the 'self-made' reader was 'a product of the age' as much as the self-educated writer (240). It was important for such readers to feel close to the authors they admired. Many of Hardy's fan letters indicate that he sparked an interest among the lower-middle and working classes. A 'young working-class man', Tom Bass, presents himself as a real-life Jude in his letter to Hardy (8 June 1922). Bass works all day in a workshop and then goes home to immerse himself in a world of literature that he valued more highly than 'precious jewels' (8 June 1922). In writing directly to Hardy it suggests a need to be more deeply connected to literary society than his environment allowed.

Personal correspondence reduced the distance between a venerated writer and members of the public as the letter form provided a more intimate layer within an emerging fan culture. What becomes apparent is that, while the correspondents deferentially position themselves far below the famed writer, the



sending of a letter is one way in which they were also able to identify themselves as a genuine lover of literature and to be acknowledged for their independent acts of cultural improvement. The lionising culture of the period can then be understood as a way of affirming that the reader had the ability to perceive literary talent, as, for example, when one reader, Wallace Brockway, wrote: 'It is with hesitation that I venture to approach the greatest man in the world of literature' (9 July 1924).

Those who sought intellectual and emotional stimulation through serious literature had access to provincial periodicals, with syndicators, such as Tillotson's of Bolton, printing Hardy's work alongside that of Kipling, Barrie and Conan Doyle (Altick 364). Cheap editions of Hardy's works were also available by the end of the nineteenth century. Hardy was convinced by 'the transformative power of reading' (Richardson, 'Crazy for Books' n. pag.) and this was a view that was evidently shared by many of his fans. Unlike the numerous published memoirs of the upper-middle classes, self-educated readers from this period did not leave many records, but in writing to a famed author, their accounts of their reading habits and interests survive in the archives.

Providing access to late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century reading experiences, the letters aid our understanding of what the act of reading meant to individuals in particular social and cultural circumstances. Letters from correspondents demonstrate that at this time fiction was a direct source of life guidance. For instance, Lala Fisher, writing from Australia in 1922, situates

her reading experience within her relationship as part of the bonding process.

Fisher refers to a reading circle, made up of her partner and one other friend, in which they read and re-read Hardy's novels and poems together. She seems to have taken inspiration from the ideas explored in *Jude* by repeatedly referring to her cohabitation with a 'lover' rather than a husband:

For twenty years you have been a part of our life and through your thought and work we have often found something that made us, even in our most anxious moments, live and try anew.

Only this week we have been re-reading a book of yours – for perhaps the twentieth time.

For a long time I could not forgive you for "Father Time" in "Jude the Obscure", but now I would not have him out of the book if I could. He had to be.

My lover – we have been with one another over twenty years I think – first read one of your books to me – the great "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" & then we read "The Mayor of Casterbridge". And then re-read them both. And so it has been ever since – reading and re-reading your many books.

[...]

A short time ago I became quite angry concerning you while reading again "A group of noble Dames". "He detests women – he is most unjust to them" I ranted. But very soon afterwards I retracted "He understands them too well – & his Tess is the tortured upholder of that (earthily-obscured) ideal of chastity which has always been humanity's star".

Richard Robert Frank Hill is the name of the editor of this magazine & the lover who loves me & whom I love. [Nurse] O'Sullivan is the third in our Hardy reading circle. We all send you our deep respect and regard and we say as a prayer "God bless you, guard you, uplift you & hold you in His love".

(9 May 1922)

Similarly, Katherine Burton wrote to Hardy to inform him that a female friend of her husband's was so 'nervous of the success of our marriage [that she] gave us *Jude the Obscure* to read on our honeymoon' (2 June 1922). Perhaps most explicitly, a young woman, Bernice C. Skidelsky, wrote in 1922 to say that:

you have been among the outstanding influences [...] in my mental life. During the very sensitive formative period of my existence [...] you were among those writers who helped my opening mind to a firmer grasp on a hundred and one truths. (16 September 1922)

Having felt Hardy to be such a powerful influence in her life, she naturally sought to find 'mutuality' in an acquaintance that, up until the epistolary act, was 'entirely one-sided'. Hopeful of a meeting, this reader was keen to 'take a morning train' from her hotel in London to reach Dorchester one afternoon the following week. Hardy replied to explain that he would be away until the beginning of the next month, admittedly evading a meeting, but still engaging in a dialogue that would have been meaningful to such an ardent reader.

Many of the fan letters reveal how eager readers were to present critical readings of Hardy's work. Whereas Henry James painted a picture of insincere literary admirers who had not read more than a few pages of a celebrated author in his short story, the readers who wrote to Hardy were often thoughtful, perceptive students of his work. Overwhelmingly, the fan letters, read as a whole, show that Hardy was not perceived as a pessimist by the reading public, but was rather understood to reveal the 'essential sadness' and the reality of tragedy in everyday life. If many of the periodicals and newspapers complained that Sue, in *Jude the Obscure*, was 'unbalanced' and 'unhinged', the fan letters show that Hardy's readership, especially as it evolved in the 1920s, could see an accurate depiction of a woman caught between opposing societal restrictions. In 1921, for instance, Margaret Donaldson Boehm wrote to Hardy:

I am sure that I understand Sue [...] The tragedy was due to her being too good, rather than too bad, was it not? – due to her being too delicate and fine an instrument for the bungling touch of the "world's coarse thumb and finger".

(4 January 1921)

In 'The Anti-Marriage League', published in *Blackwood's Magazine* in January 1896, Mrs Oliphant had doubted that 'there were readers in England to whom this infamy can be palatable', but the letters show that there were a vast number of readers who found Hardy's last novel not only 'palatable' but a relevant and necessary narrative. The published critic, then, was not necessarily an accurate voice for the public. Through letter-writing, readers could communicate their views and opinions directly to the author and in so doing present a quiet challenge to the critics who deigned to speak for the majority. Hardy's prefaces to later editions of his novels showed that receiving letters from his readers did have a personal effect as a counterblast to the negative reviews of some critics. However, while Hardy publicly acknowledged the importance of receiving individual reader responses, he did not always reply, demonstrating a persistent wariness of celebrity culture.

With improved systems of education, letter writing became increasingly part of late Victorian culture for all classes, and writing 'letters of admiration' was regarded as a legitimate way for pupils to practice their skills in school. Evidence of this can be found in an American letter-writing manual of 1903 in which students were provided with examples of literary appreciation letters and then instructed to 'read other authors in this book and write to someone you have studied' (188). Barbara Ryan points out that students typically selected writers whom they perceived to be accessible, with perhaps the most appealing targets being popular female writers such as the American novelist Gene Stratton-Porter but I would argue that Hardy was also regarded as an

approachable celebrity.<sup>57</sup> One of the youngest correspondents in the DCM collection is William Waters, who sent Hardy a birthday postcard (Figure 30):

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<sup>57</sup> Gene Stratton-Porter (1863-1924) wrote a number of best-selling novels in the early twentieth century. At their peak, in the first decade of twentieth century, Stratton-Porter's books attracted an estimated fifty million readers and five of her novels were included in a list fifty-five books selling more than one million copies between 1895 and 1945.



Fig. 30. Postcard from William Waters to Hardy (n.d.). Dorset County Museum archive, H. 1369.

Dear Sir

Just a card in remembrance of your birthday. Wishing you happiness and success for many years to come.

from a young reader of your works

William Waters

(n.d.)

J.M. Barrie and Robert Louis Stevenson also appear to have been perceived as accessible writers for even the youngest of fans to send letters to. In 2010 the National Library of Scotland curated a display of archival objects to celebrate the anniversary of the birth of J. M. Barrie's, born one hundred and fifty years before. Alongside first-edition books and theatre programmes, a letter from one of Barrie's youngest fans – a six-year-old boy – formed part of the exhibition. However, this letter wasn't written directly to Barrie, but rather his character, Wendy from *Peter Pan*. The young letter writer had seen a performance of the play in 1907 and in his missive he declared: 'My dear darling Wendy I hope you are quite well. I am Hugh Bridson [...] age 6. I have seen you 3 times. I like you so much I want to marry you' (January 1907).<sup>58</sup> After the success of *Peter Pan*, Barrie hired Lady Cynthia Asquith as his secretary to manage the considerable body of letters he received from his fans.

Formulaic statements within many of Hardy's fan letters suggest that this type of missive had become established as a sub-genre with clear conventions by the 1890s, having emerged as a more nascent form in relation to earlier Victorian

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<sup>58</sup> This letter has been digitised and can be viewed online:  
[https://www.nls.uk/news/pop\\_ups/letter-to-wendy](https://www.nls.uk/news/pop_ups/letter-to-wendy)

idols such as Byron, Tennyson and the Brownings. Digitisation helps to demonstrate how a seemingly diverse selection of letter-writers across gender, class and geographical boundaries in fact fit into quite a homogenised community, as the writing of appreciation letters existed as ritualised fan behaviour in the cultural conditions within which Hardy's work circulated. By searching for key words, digital transcriptions yield evidence of the same manners of expression from separate letters across the collection, including multiple references to a desire to experience tactile interaction through 'shaking your hand' or 'kissing your feet', references to 'silliness', 'foolish[ness]' and 'childish' behaviour in relation to acts of fandom, and reverent statements of '[profound] respect', 'esteem', 'admiration' and 'gratitude'. Often the opening lines of these letters are a place for senders to declare themselves as stranger and acknowledge a level of impertinence in the act of communicating without being known. However, many of them then go on to describe how they perceive Hardy as a friend; the letters typically convey a high degree of intimacy, such as Henry W. Sim's confession at the end of his letter that he felt 'as [if] I were writing to an old friend' (8 August 1921). Yet another reader shares her lifetime of experiences with the emotional valence of familiar correspondence: 'I am a vicar's widow' and 'my adored only sister [is] in a mad house' (Baumann, 19 January 1920). This correspondent positioned Hardy as a friend and felt comfortable sharing familial intimacies with him because through his poetry she had found solace: 'verses like "The Division" express one's pain in a [...] way that seems to still it.'

In writing to an author, the reader was keen to construct a sense of self as an individual, distinguishing themselves from the faceless masses of the reading



public through their personal recognition of an author's genius. Through their desire to be made visible to the author, the letters typically include detailed accounts of the correspondents' lives, followed by their emotional response to reading Hardy's work. For instance, in 1923 a 'schoolboy of 16 years of age', Albert G. Berrisford, wrote to tell Hardy that he was 'a native of "Budmouth"' and 'played around the birthplace of your illustrious name-sake in that lovely village of Portisham' using shared knowledge to position himself closer than other readers who did not know the real landscape behind the fictional depictions (29 January 1923). Having not received a reply, Berrisford wrote again three years later, explaining his need for communication to 'relieve myself of some of the thoughts and feelings I am experiencing after re-reading your works again' (29 January 1923). Placing Hardy's genius alongside that of Shelley and Shakespeare, the sender suggests, however, that living at the same time as Hardy had value for him as a reader because he could seek to establish a dialogue with a living author as a desirable extension of his reading experience. The ability to share personal details within the space of a letter enabled admiring readers to re-negotiate their position as fans – creating the perception that they had moved into a closer circle, occupied by the literati, since first-hand contact can be understood as 'a desire for emotional and intellectual complementation by an admired person' (Millim 140).

Many of the letters reveal that individual readers were aware of a community of fans, even though they were not connected in the way that fan groups are in today's society. Often in these cases the sender wants to be seen as Hardy's most avid reader, suggesting a competitive element to literary adulation. William

Blatchford, writing in the summer of 1925, painted a particularly fanatical picture as his letter almost suggests that his life has been written by Hardy:

I can at least say for myself, I think, that nobody has read your novels with a deeper interest [...] 'Jude the Obscure' appeals to me so forcibly because I am in a way one of the many Judes there are in the world' [...] nearly everything has gone wrong in my own life because Fate has played with me. (21 July 1925)

Similarly, Gertrude Trewern described herself as 'an unimportant person', 'a retired elementary school teacher and a farmer's wife', not worthy of writing to Hardy as 'so great and famous are those who pay homage to you' (11 July 1924). However, she then goes on to claim that 'apart from those who know you personally I doubt if you occupy a larger place in anyone's affection than in mine' (11 July 1924).

What did Hardy make of the strangers who declared a long-standing but one-sided friendship with him? It is possible to think of this unsolicited mail as failed communication because it so rarely resulted in genuine dialogue. Nevertheless, the act of writing and posting the original letter may amount to successful communication: in the words of Stanley 'reciprocity and exchange' are not 'essential requirements' of the letter genre ('Epistolarium' 207). However, despite claims of intimacy from admirers, the reader could only know an imagined construct of Hardy through his work and the mediated press image. As a result, the repeated use of generic honorifics and elaborate terms of address in appreciation letters may have made it difficult for Hardy to recognise himself within the epistolary projections he received. Derrida's theory of the 'phantom self' is useful in understanding how the two sides of epistolary communication might not successfully meet. J. Hillis Miller explains:

writing [of a letter] dispossesses both the writer and the receiver of themselves. Writing creates a new phantom written self and a phantom receiver [...] There is correspondence all right but it is between two entirely phantasmagorical or fantastic persons. (172)

In this context, an admirer could construct two phantom selves in which friendship and familiarity existed on an imagined plane as a result of sustained reading of Hardy's work but not be convincingly transferred to the recipient.

Writing from Canada in 1924, W. B. Beer opens his missive by declaring 'although living several thousand miles from you, I feel I have a mental and spiritual acquaintance with you and I make bold to introduce myself', which reveals how the reader-writer relationship is perceived as an intimate bond because reading provides imagined access to the mind of the author (7 December 1924). For Beer, a fifty-eight year-old teacher, reading was a way of understanding human existence: 'you have helped give background to a life [...] with many concrete problems'; 'you have helped me much in helping me to form my philosophy of life' (7 December 1924). Although he referred to himself as a 'humble admirer', on a mental level Beer aligned himself with Hardy by stating that the author's writing resonated with his own 'observations of life' (7 December 1924).

In some of the letters, longing for a relationship comes through in careful linguistic positioning of an imagined familial relationship. The most vivid example in the collection comes from a girl named after Hardy's most well-known character, Tess. Tess Hope wrote to share this information with Hardy in 1921 and referred to herself as 'your goddaughter in name' having looked on Hardy as a 'spiritual godfather' as she grew up (22 October 1921). The emotional valence of the letter form afforded more intimate reader-writer

connections to be played out. Letters act as a method of transference in which the desired intimacy with a famed writer is partially achieved as the reader is able to commit his or her feelings to paper. While Byron received fan letters that typically conveyed sexual undertones and romantic fantasies (Throsby 116), in writing to Hardy, I argue that readers identified him as a paternal figure because of the compassion he showed through his writing.

### 5.3 The writer as physician

In the 1890s Max Gate saw a rise in unsolicited letters after what *Life and Work* refers to as the ‘deep impression on the general and uncritical public by [*Tess*]’ (257). First published in serial form, it appeared in *The Graphic* between July and November 1891, and was simultaneously published in *Harper’s Magazine* in America and the *Sydney Mail* in Australia. Encouraged by Tess’s confession, a number of women wrote letters to Hardy in which they shared the burden of similar situations. *Life and Work* states that he ‘sometimes sadly thought that they came from sincere women in trouble’ (257), and Hardy’s decision not to reply to what he believed to be genuine cries for help seems to have played on his mind. According to his autobiographical account, Hardy ‘carefully destroyed’ all such letters in order to protect the women, but T. R. Wright has identified two that remain within the archive, perhaps because their disclosures were less detailed and the general tone of both letters was one of reader admiration. In 1927 a young female reader from the Hague wrote to tell Hardy how much *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* ‘moved me’ because ‘I’ve never read a book in which I felt something of myself as in your so well-painted Tess’ (Moog, 5 July 1927)

(Figure 31a; 31b). Going into the detail of Tess's character, Louise Moog shared her personal view that killing Alec was 'not a crime' and 'not at all a crime which ought to be punished' (5 July 1927). This commentary shows her psychological understanding of the situation as provocation, prompting a shift from character analysis to self-disclosure – 'several troubles I have had, I met in this book' – because she felt that Hardy 'underst[ood] a woman' (5 July 1927). Here the reader's use of the epistolary form is as a site of safe disclosure, resulting from active reading which served as intimate emotional experience felt vicariously through identification with fictional characters. The second 'Tess' letter was from a twenty-year-old, Emily Anita Pass, writing from New York in 1927 to disclose that 'some of my own experiences in life have been not unlike [Tess's]' (3 December 1927). The two letters, representative of a community of readers who were able to find solace in Hardy's novel, reveal how individual readers generated personal meaning from the text, participating in what Alison M. Scott refers to as 'the creation of culture' (31). For female readers who had experienced non-consensual sex or suffered pregnancy outside of marriage, reading is shown to have had a positive psychological effect, used in social and emotional ways to understand their own position within society. Hardy questioned why 'they should have put themselves in the power of a stranger by these revelations [...] when they would not trust persons nearest to them with their secret' (257) but one explanation is that, having undergone intense emotional identification in the reading process, feelings of intimacy with the author manifest and subsequently result in confessional letters that serve a similar function to diaristic records.

The Hague, July 5th. 1927.

To Mr. Thomas Hardy.

To Messrs. Macmillan and Co. Ltd.  
London. St. Martins' Street.

Dear Mr. Thomas Hardy,  
author of "Tess of the D'Urbervilles,"

May I introduce my self  
to you, I am a Dutch girl, who just finished  
your above mentioned work and I cannot  
resist the desire to tell you how that work  
has moved me, how deep an impression  
it made upon me.

I've never read a book in which I felt  
something of my self as in your so well-painted  
Tess.

I think Tess character so beautiful, it is  
never weak, she always gives and never  
asks. I think it so lovely when  
Cruel Angel has let her alone, Tess makes  
herself high and when then somebody  
says "What a monument of a maid"  
she says "I don't care --- but I love him

Fig. 31a. Letter from Louise Moog to Hardy (5 July 1927:1). Dorset County  
Museum archive, H.4605.

just the same. :-  
And after all I think it not a crime when the  
killed that vile wretch, and not at all a  
crime which ought to be punished. - And  
not at all punished in that way. -

That killed fellow was the cause of all -  
the cause of her miserable life (and in the  
same time so beautiful life) - and more  
not the parents indeed the cause of all?

Who deserves punishment? Very least  
of all.

I think life so difficult and several  
troubles I have had, I met in this book.  
Oh, I wish that there are more people in  
the world as you are, for you understand  
a woman. -

"I" is the first book I read of you -  
and I hope to read soon more of you. -  
Many thanks for "I", "What  
beautiful descriptions of nature it contains!"  
and I hope that you see somewhere in  
England where nature is lonely and

life may be so much better than in  
a great town. I wish you were my grand-father.

May I shake hands with you?

Sincerely yours

Louise Moog

Louise Moog,  
c/o Gentleite Lichfield  
Industrial St  
New Quay,  
Holland.

Fig. 31b. Letter from Louise Moog to Hardy (5 July 1927: 2-3). Dorset County Museum archive, H.4605.

The distance between sender and recipient in epistolary communication might also explain the tendency for fan mail to move into the territory of confessional writing. A particularly moving letter in the archives is one from a young twenty-year-old girl, Charlotte L. Baker, written in 1917 from Newton, Massachusetts. Weber and Weber's *Descriptive Checklist* simply states that Miss Baker 'loved *The Woodlanders*', marking it as just another letter of appreciation. However, this is not the central premise for her communication. After an initial declaration of gratitude, Baker reveals her distress and inner turmoil, stating that she does not feel 'right for this world':

My trouble is a terribly subtle one & written down in black & white shows none of the suffering of my poor, tortured mind. It's simply this Mr Hardy, I can't find any place for myself in this world. It sounds terribly simple doesn't it – but really, it has nearly driven me to suicide several times. (24 October 1917)

Read retrospectively, the language suggests that the sender was suffering from depression. In deciding to disclose thoughts of suicide in a letter was Baker using the epistolary space as an outlet for thoughts and emotions, or was she seeking direct support? Several lines from her epistle are requests for help, even action:

Please Mr Hardy, forgive my temerity and please help me!

I am writing to you begging you dear Mr Hardy to tell me what the trouble is. Mr Hardy, do you know what ails me? Please help me! (24 October 1917)

Here the sender's appeals indicate a complex perception of the author occupying more of a psychological position in which letter-writing takes on a therapeutic purpose. Unlike diary writing, letters ensure that thoughts and fears are shared with someone if the missive is sent to its intended recipient. The act of sending, then, has the potential to affect change and might be more



therapeutically beneficial, even if the recipient does not reply. However, in this instance it seems Baker did want Hardy to intervene. In her letter she presents herself as one of his characters, almost hoping that he will write her into a narrative that would allow her to understand the difficulties she was experiencing:

What is the matter – I seem so different from everybody else – Only the people in your beloved books seem at all like me. Fundamentally I am a mixture of Jude & Eustacia – without any of goddess qualities of the latter.

Now, Mr Hardy, do you know what ails me? I am engaged to the dearest man in the world – but I don't even care much for him & don't want to marry him – oh it is so abominable to be of no use in this world – I used to have dreams of being a great concert pianist – but these are shattered now – & I don't even care to be one! I feel, after having read all your novels, that you will understand me, if anyone can! Please help me! (24 October 1917)

Ramona Koval (2013) argues that literary fans are not so caught up in the cult of celebrity for what is sought is wisdom rather than spectacle and consumption. Given that significant works of literature offer insight into philosophical dilemmas, if we read a novel 'to find out how to live' as Koval contends (36), then by extension a letter to the author could be a more direct way of seeking guidance. In terms of shaping the postbag of fan letters at the turn of the century, *Tess* was significant because it encouraged discussion of taboo subjects. As mentioned in the introduction, Hardy retained a letter from another reader and fan, B. K. Daniels, who thanked him for writing *Tess* and *Jude*. In this letter, Daniels declared that:

If I had a daughter unfolding into womanhood, I should certainly place *Tess* and *Jude* in her hands, and feel that I had provided the instruction

which most mothers are too cowed by convention to give. (29 November 1905)

Richardson notes, '[i]f novels were more inclined to treat taboo subjects with more candour, they might contribute to sex education' ('Crazy for Books' n.pag.). Within this context, fan letters become an important resource in mapping changes in societal attitudes and behaviours after the publication of seminal literary works. For instance, Frank Theodore, a private 'temporarily in the Tenth Middlesex during this awful, though fortunately only transitory time', wrote in 1915 to discuss *Tess*:

I could not help wondering how you being a man could so well imagine the thoughts of an outraged pure woman. Could all that agony be borne by one poor girl? Surely an English Court of Law would not have condemned her to death considering the evidence which would have been brought forward at the trial by Angel Clare and the landlady? (19 February 1915)

Theodore's questions suggest an eagerness for further discussion of the critical issues raised in the novel. The young soldier acknowledges 'I am in rather a difficult position, for as you clearly show in your writings, you do not care what any man thinks of your books'. Given that Edmund Gosse had publicly written about Hardy's predominantly male readership, Theodore's comments offer an alternative perception of Hardy's ideal reader. However, that Hardy kept the letter suggests that he did care what his readers, male and female, thought. While some fan letters might be preserved by an author for posterity, Hardy may have also been building an alternative record to published reviews, ensuring that his readers were given a voice. Frank Theodore uses the space of the letter to express empathy with Tess and criticism of the actions of both Alec d'Urberville and Angel Clare, demonstrating a perceptive reading of the novel that had been missed by some of the critics:

I felt that the false d'Urberville deserved to die from some horrible lingering disease. I have little sympathy for Angel Clare – how about his sin of which he says no more and over which Tess seems to pass? It is a kind of poetical justice that Tess refused to see him longer. (19 February 1915)

Like Sassoon, Theodore appears to have read Hardy's novels while he was away for the War. He describes going 'out into the night air to meditate upon the tragedy under the stars', perhaps finding *Tess* a source of both distraction and psychological support during what he describes as 'this awful, though fortunately only transitory time'. Although there are only a handful of letters from soldiers in the archive, read together, they suggest that reading Hardy was form of therapy and the ability to write to the author himself intensified this feeling. In *Love and Eugenics in the late nineteenth century* (2008) Angelique Richardson notes that Hardy appreciated the therapeutic benefits of reading, referring to the reader as a patient in his article, 'The Profitable Reading of Fiction' (1888). Theodore's letter also employs a medical discourse when he writes, '[t]he expression of thanks to you, must be similar to that tendered to a great surgeon by a patient, whose life he has saved under the influence of anaesthetics' (19 February 1915).

In his biography of Hardy, Pinion includes the following anecdote about one of Hardy's fans who wrote and then visited Hardy at Max Gate. Like Charlotte Baker, this reader sought a confessional relationship with Hardy, having been moved by reading *Tess*:

On 8 October a letter arrived from a Chinese man who had already been refused an appointment. It indicated that he had a tragic story to tell, and would be at the door at three o'clock. Arriving punctually, this small, melancholy-looking man with an appealing round face wished to have

Hardy's advice on whether to write his tragic memories as an autobiography or a novel. He was overcome with emotion when he told the story, and sobbed aloud. He had killed his sister when it was found that she was in 'the same condition as Tess'; after reading Hardy's novel he realised he ought to have revered her. Hardy was moved, but Florence's scepticism was roused when their visitor asked for an autograph and suggested Hardy should help him to write his tragic history. He spoke English so badly that it was difficult to follow what he said. When she saw a volume of Hardy's poetry by the visitor's coat and hat in the hall she was more sceptical than ever. She had learned to distrust autograph-hunters. (387)

Pinion's account of the incident highlights Hardy's sympathetic inclination but the end focus implies Florence was more accurate in her suspicion that this was the insincere act of a celebrity-hunter. The letter from this visitor, Kuo Yu-shou has been preserved in the archive. He declares that: 'I shall never have a clear conscience until my family life has been written and I cannot write it unless I see you' (7 October 1927). While we cannot know how genuine the sentiments in this letter are, it does open up questions about just what effect *Tess* had on individuals within the reading public. When taking a collaborative approach to life writing, there is an argument for exploring the lives of readers alongside authors.

While the archive collection contains many instances from autograph-hunters in which the letter serves as a transactional request to obtain Hardy's signature as a valuable possession or tangible souvenir, other fan letters operated on a more meaningful level in which readers shared something of themselves, rather than just participating in cultural consumption. If, as Millim claims, Victorian and Edwardian fans constructed parasocial relationships through collecting, this is still quite a passive activity when compared with epistolary communication, yet there has been little critical attention focused on letter-writing as a form of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century fan behaviour. The epistolary form can

be regarded as an intermediate step between existing as an unknown reader and operating on a familiar level of genuine acquaintance with the admired author, offering a way in which the reader is made visible in what could previously only be a remote dynamic prior to postal reform.

## 6. A Wessex for the world: literary tourism and fan culture

Examination of the fan letters in the archive suggests that what was particular about writing to Hardy was the opportunity to express a degree of psychological identification and use the space for their own disclosures. Another characteristic aspect of the fan mail Hardy received, was the evident appeal of discussing aspects of Wessex with its creator. The letters reveal a fascination with a fictional world that overlapped with real places. In this final chapter I extend discussion of Hardy's fan letters by looking at those that feature as precursors to acts of literary tourism and detective work. Beyond this, I consider how writing about Wessex offered a point of connection between reader and writer; within the space of the letter, the reader is able to express ideas about Wessex as they imagine and understand it. Within the context of the British Empire and imperial power, I argue that such letters can be read as sites in which Britain as a country could be creatively re-imagined and re-written by both writer and reader.

For the middle classes, literary tourism was a leisure activity that worked as extension of their reading experience. By the 1870s a plethora of guides were available, such as *A Literary Pilgrimage Among the Haunts of Famous British Authors* (1895) and *Homes and Haunts of Famous Authors* (1906). Through this intermediary channel the physical distance between writer and reader was greatly reduced. Hardy, like many other writers of the period, found himself overwhelmed with admirers who flocked to his house in Dorchester. But with Hardy, what started with a visit to his home could turn into several days or

weeks of Wessex exploration. Fan letters often document these acts of literary tourism and provided a platform to discuss Wessex directly with the author.

Hardy was the creator of an imagined world, one which really only existed in the writer's mind, but there was typically a readerly desire to work as literary detective to close the gap between the ideas of Hardy's fiction and the real landscape.

A number of Victorian tourist guides included literary details of Dorset and Annie MacDonell's study *Thomas Hardy*, published in 1894, provided a suggested tour encouraging both British tourists and those from overseas to participate in visual exploration of the country's cultural heritage. Such publications legitimised literary tourism and offered a constructive outlet for reader adulation, a physical activity that existed outside of the mind. Individual readers also took it upon themselves to use the novels as personal tour guides, with the term 'reader pilgrims' adopted as a preferable alternative to the more pejorative 'tourist'. In 1912, a neatly handwritten letter from two self-labelled pilgrims 'home from India' arrived with the following quotation from Hardy's 'A Poet' – 'smart pilgrims from afar / Curious on where his hauntings are' – which deliberately omitted Hardy's original message that the poet 'does not care' for this sort of interest:

For loud acclaim he does not care  
By the august or rich or fair,  
Nor for smart pilgrims from afar,  
Curious on where his hauntings are.

This highlights a discord between the readers who felt an almost spiritual connection with Hardy and the writer's need for distance, which he appears to communicate through this poem.

Another Wessex visitor was Alyce Hoogs, who came over seven thousand miles from Hawaii. Hoogs delivered her letter to Hardy's home in Dorchester in 1926, not via the postal service but rather, 'pushed under the door' in an act that evokes the fictional moment when Tess's letter to Angel Clare is 'thrust under the carpet' and remains undiscovered. Luckily this letter reached its recipient and survives today:

My dear Mr Hardy –

I came to Dorchester, so that I could tread in the fields that you have so perfectly described – This evening I made a little pilgrimage out to Max Gate, so that I could see where you lived. I passed you on the roadside as you took your evening stroll.

Will you pardon me for addressing you and laying my deepest appreciation at your feet, for the many beautiful books you have written? My happiest moments have been when engrossed in one of your studies.

With fondest appreciation

Alyce L. Hoogs (15 July 1926)

Hardy's construction of Wessex reawakened Anglo-Saxon heritage at a time when Ralph Pite argues 'Victorian culture restructured the imaginative geography of the British Isles' ('Hardy's Geography' 50). Once in the public domain, Hardy's Wessex formed part of the national identity that was carefully curated to bolster the ideological construct of the British Empire. What originated as one writer's literary fantasy was adopted and controlled as a marketing tool for the country. In a letter to E.W. Kerr, Mayor of Dorchester until 1903, Hardy depicted literary tourists as invasive in their attempts to 'penetrate



a disguise' (6 April 1902, *CL* 3: 17). Hardy encouraged the Town Council to publish an official Dorchester guide book but felt it would be inappropriate to be directly involved as 'an impression that I have any practical object in popularizing the town would I think undo what little I may have unconsciously done towards it in the past' (6 April 1902, *CL* 3: 17).

In 'Wessex, Literary Pilgrims, and Thomas Hardy', Sara Haslam argues that the 'creator' became an imprisoned 'victim' of his own construction. Some of the fan letters in the archive provide support for this interpretation (164). One correspondent, Sam J. Banks, acknowledged that Hardy must be faced with 'an army of curious tourists' on a daily basis. However, Banks tried to distance himself from other voyeurs by declaring himself 'a serious lover of good literature'. And yet, his request 'to meet you personally, look into your eyes, grab your hand and hear the music of your voice' seems physically intrusive (11 May 1925). When Banks's first letter went unanswered, he then made a second attempt a year later. This letter outlined another planned trip through Europe, with a stay in Britain of six to eight weeks during which he hoped to 'visit your neighbourhood and take a Kodak picture of your home'. Rather than requesting to meet Hardy, he instead asserted an intrusive presence on Hardy's territory which was difficult to prevent:

So if you may notice an out-of-doors sort of man, about forty-three years of age (42 at this writing) [...] reverently attempting to snap a picture of your abode, you may guess that it may be, yours sincerely Sam J. Banks. (11 December 1926)

The use of 'reverently' evokes an image of deferential hero-worship but this is blended with a new invasive tourism by the reference to 'Kodak picture[s]' and 'snap[ping] a picture'. In a similarly invasive manner, the Chinese reader, Kuo

Yu-shou, who visited Hardy in the last year of his life, used the letter form almost as a telegram – informing of his intended visit to Max Gate, without giving enough time for Hardy to reply:

I take the train to come tomorrow morning, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. I shall be waiting at the front door of your house. (7 October 1927)

Such assertive action could not be stopped. Presumably, Hardy's only options were to either avoid answering the door or welcome his uninvited guest. As discussed in chapter five, it appears that Hardy decided on the latter in this instance. Both the examples of Sam J. Banks and Kuo Yu-shou demonstrate how the fan-writer relationship generated an imbalance in which enrichment for the reader came at a cost to the privacy of the author.

Postal communication also enabled readers to ask Hardy questions about fictional locations. This placed a new demand on the writer to act in partnership with his readers to uncover real places. A question from one young correspondent about the precise location of the fictional 'Cliff without a name' in *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, prompted this response via Hardy's secretary:

The "Cliff without a name" in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* as it is anywhere, is near Beeny, about a mile from Boscastle. See Mr Hardy's "Collected Poems" 1 vol (Macmillan & Co) .... Sec<sup>59</sup> (7 March 1925)

There is an underlying note of frustration in this reply as the reader had mistakenly thought the cliff was described in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and had not engaged in further study of Hardy's poetry to find out the answer for herself. However, examination of the letter in the archive reveals that the fan in question

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<sup>59</sup> This transcription is of the original pencil draft reply written on the back of the letter, which was sent on 6 March 1925. In the text-encoded transcription, both the real and the fictional locations are built into the markup. For the real location, a link to Google Maps is provided.

was probably quite young. The address at the top the letter reads: 'Girls' High School, Lytham Rd., Blackpool' (6 March 1925) (Figure 32).

Girls' High School,  
Lytham Rd.,  
Blackpool.  
6-3-25.

Dear Mr Hardy, I'm very sorry to trouble  
you, but I have been wondering whether you  
can tell me where the "Cliff without a name" is.  
It appears on the maps, and as far as I  
remember it is mentioned in *Tales of The Dillibonville*.  
I am very interested in it as I live in  
Bude, and know that particular part of the  
coast fairly well.

Fig. 32. Letter from Marie Flower to Hardy (6 March 1925: 1). Dorset County Museum archive, H. 2410.

There appears to have been a disparity between Hardy's attitude to unknown tourists and fellow writers and friends who asked for insider hints and tips to aid their own detective interests. Often Hardy responded quite willingly to such requests from familiar correspondents. Shortly after reading *Tess* in 1892, the American writer Margaret Deland sent a letter asking whether she would be able to find the 'Vale of Blackmoor' if she visited England. In Hardy's response he provided Deland with ample information to achieve her desired goal:

My dear Mrs Deland:

I enclose herewith a sketch-map which will be a slight guide to Mr Deland and yourself on the walking-tour you propose. The fictitious names are in red, the real ones in pencil. From it you will learn that 'The Vale of Blackmoor' is a veritable valley: & that 'The Valley of the Great Dairies watered by the From' is, in fact, the Valley of the *Frome*. (21 June 1892, CL 1: 273)

By including a personally-sketched map, Hardy created a sense of intimacy with Deland which would not have been extended to unknown readers. Similarly, Hardy readily added relevant topographical markers to a Wessex map for Florence Henniker.

Some Victorian writers, such as Harriet Martineau, personally cultivated an association between themselves and a specific geographical location. It might be argued that Hardy was an active participant in establishing Wessex as a place to be discovered, since he included a map of Egdon Heath in early editions of the novels and then replaced this sketch with a more complete Wessex map in editions after 1880. However, Hardy's attitudes to literary tourism were more ambivalent than that of Martineau. Nevertheless, Hardy was willing to entertain the interests of the landscape photographer Hermann Lea,

who dedicated over ten years to exploring the South West topography in relation to Hardy's literature. Given that this resulted in an official publication, Hardy seems to have seen the project as a way to play out the longed-for dynamic of the writer taking individual readers on a guided tour. The first publication, *A Handbook to the Wessex County of Thomas Hardy's Novels and Poems*, appeared in 1905 but a more comprehensive guide was then published as a companion to the Wessex edition of the novels in 1913. According to the introduction to this guidebook, Hardy toured the landscape with Lea to find the right visual depictions of his imagined world and corrected the proofs before publication. By collaborating with Lea, he offered other readers the opportunity to experience vicariously the sense of a personal tour. In 1944 Lea typed up his memories of the time he spent with Hardy and he was at pains to emphasise the friendship that existed between them, distancing himself from the curious tourists who would be his readers. What also marked him apart from the general public was his position as tenant in Hardy's birthplace 'immediately behind [which] was the Heath known to Wessex Novel readers as a part of Egdon' (20). Through comment on familiar details like this, Lea situated himself firmly within Hardy's landscape.

The influence of Lea's Wessex guide can be seen in a letter from a young journalist student, Clyde A. Beals, over from America and preparing to take a tour of Hardy Country 'using to identify the names of the villages, Mr Hermann Lea's "Thomas Hardy's Wessex" (28 August 1920). In trying to set himself apart from others who requested a visit, Beals promoted himself as a journalist but he could not have identified a worse premise, given Hardy's sceptical attitude to this profession. Similarly a letter from E. A. Cross, sent to Hardy in 1925,

recounted a suggestion made to a local taxi driver to 'get a copy of Lea's *Hardy's Wessex* and make up a tour which would take visitors to more of the places you have used in your novels and poems' (9 January 1925). What emerges in this letter is a secondary narrative of the taxi driver, Porter, attempting to protect Hardy from an endless stream of admirers. Cross writes:

Of course I wanted a copy [of the *Collected Poems*] autographed, but you were so carefully protected by H. Porter that I did not have the courage to suggest even to him that we should stop and ask you for the autograph. (9 January 1925)

This respectful act is then undermined by Cross's request for Hardy to send him an autograph, almost in recompense, and concludes with a passing remark that if Porter did decide to make a tour, as suggested, 'I fear you will have to become more of a secluded person than you have been in the past, to avoid the inquisitive tourist' (9 January 1925). As with so many of the fans who wrote to Hardy, there is a certain hypocrisy in the words and actions of the letter writer, who deems himself a separate entity to the crowds of 'inquisitive tourist[s]' while participating fully as a member of this community. If Hardy hoped to offer the reader a vicarious experience of touring with him via Lea's guide book, it did not quell the number of visitors to his door or letters through his post box.

Having eventually offered up the closest real approximations to the imagined world of his fictional Wessex, Hardy appears to have playfully left an alternative message within his autobiography. In the last chapter of *Life and Work*, a letter from Hardy to Mr Arthur M. Hind was reprinted, perhaps as a message to every reader and literary detective. In response to receiving Hind's watercolour of Little Hintock, Hardy wrote:

The drawing of the barn that you have been so kind as to send me has arrived uninjured [...] As to the spot being the “Little Hintock” of *The Woodlanders* – that is another question. You will be surprised and shocked at my saying that I myself do not know where “Little Hintock” is! Several tourists have told me that they have found it, in every detail, and have offered to take me to it, but I have never gone.

[...]

The topographers you mention as identifying the scene are merely guessers and are wrong. (LW 466)

Despite Hardy’s conflicting approaches to pinning Wessex to real locations, this statement shows how he ultimately retained control by denying any real existence in his final testimony.

The inclusion of a map in Hardy’s novels was really about engaging in the narrative, it was not there for geographical accuracy. Creative licence enabled Hardy to stretch the borders as far as Oxford or Reading in *Jude* and all the way West to include Penzance and the Isles of Scilly in the short story ‘A Mere Interlude’. Hardy’s argument was that his later geographical re-workings allowed him to re-construct Wessex as a more harmonious thread of connection across all of his fiction and the final map reflected this process.

## 6.1 Mapping Wessex

Hardy’s ideas about mapping Wessex were aligned with early advocates of geographical study in the 1880s, such as Archibald Geikie and T. H. Huxley, as Ralph Pite acknowledges (‘Hardy’s Geogrphahy’ 5). Geography as an academic subject was established in 1887 as a means of ensuring that the empire had a

strong and knowledgeable youth. However, Geikie's rationale for including geography as a school subject was so that each individual could 'look at things with their own eyes, and draw from them their own conclusions [about] [...] their conceptions of their immediate surroundings, of their country, and of the whole globe' (Geikie vii, qtd. in Pite 5). Maps were regarded as sources that should be used imaginatively, to make journeys and encourage a 'zest of personal discovery'. This is also a useful position from which to interpret some of the fan letters that came to Hardy from across the globe. Hardy's works offered personal discovery and observation of an England that was changeable within the pages of fiction. Borders and place names were flexible entities. The act of reading about a part real, part dream version of England gave licence to not only the writer's creativity but also that of the reader. In this context, the fictional imaginings of Wessex offered a concept of Britain as a country that could be creatively re-written and re-imagined by both writer and non-native reader.

While there has been critical attention of literary tourism guides in relation to Hardy's Wessex, readers' letters have not been used as source material to understand this cultural activity. A recent critical shift has sought to re-read fans not as consumers who are 'unable to maintain critical distance from the image they are consuming' but rather as 'powerful and highly active participants in cultural production' (Throsby 227). This change in perception was driven by the work of fan theorist Henry Jenkins in the 1990s who presented fans as 'engaged readers who are powerfully assertive in their creation of meaning, reworking existing texts as the basis for their own cultural creations and social interactions' (Throsby 227).



Often correspondents referred to their own concepts and constructs of Hardy's fictional setting of Wessex. Because the boundaries were flexible in Hardy's mind and his fiction, the capacity of the landscape to be altered also gave some sense of ownership to the reader; there was freedom to imagine and re-interpret. One Hungarian correspondent wrote to inform Hardy that he was keen to publish translations of Hardy's work (5 June 1924). Bartos Zoltan had been a prisoner of war, held for many years in Siberia, where he read and found solace in Hardy's works, particularly *Far From the Madding Crowd*, *Tess* and *Jude*. Having never visited the South West of England before, Zoltan used Hardy's fictional landscape to construct an imagined world in the life of the mind. Scenes of Wessex countryside provided him with a 'mental pleasure' that counteracted the restrictive and unstimulating environment of his captivity in which he could only '[walk] up and down the packed-down roads beside the wire fence from day to day in an endless round'. Images of 'green rolling hills' offered the antithesis to his prison surroundings and 'the dull broken gaze of my comrades', 'thirty or forty thousand fellow-sufferers' (5 June 1924). In his letter, Zoltan explains how re-reading Hardy's novels 're-awaken[s] the memories of that gloomy yet not unproductive period of my life' and he can see 'the thick fog', 'hear the ravens shrieking in the camp' and 'feel the bitter cold in my eyes'. For this prisoner of war the years were 'not unproductive' because he used the time to become acquainted with Hardy's literature before embarking on two translations, completed at night in the camp. The letter provides evidence of Hardy's readers as cultural producers, stimulated by the world Hardy had created in his literature.

Pite argues that 'Hardy's writing resists the idea that Wessex is a separate, autonomous region' (8). I extend this argument by demonstrating how letters from across the globe served as points of connection, with readers recognising in Hardy not regionalism but interconnectedness.<sup>60</sup> For instance, Thomas X Lewis wrote to Hardy from Burma in 1926 to share his experience of growing up as a white man in a British colony (India having become part of the British Empire in 1858) (Figure 33):

Mr Hardy! I am not exactly what is understood as a white man. I have never been out of India. But in my little sphere books have been of great solace to me. (17 May 1926)

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<sup>60</sup> The fan letters from across the world are essential historical documents for any study of Hardy's work which takes an imperial approach. The provision of an online database will make these previously overlooked materials more readily accessible.

1926

(1)

Dear Sir,

I have been writing this letter to you since 1921. Somehow my letters seemed too impulsive, and gave me away too much to a stranger at the Antipodes. — when re-read after a month's mellowing, so to speak. Under the terrible obsession, which "Jude" and "Less" brought on me, — my letters to you (lucky, I burnt them) seemed to me like the ravings of a lunatic, and to tell you the truth, — I was thoroughly unbalanced for months. Jude! The very name used to give me palpitation!! I am much saner now, and have not touched any book by you for two years, — so I can now write with a detached mind.

But please do not let me weary you, — I will just say a few words, — for I will never be able to rest till I do. — You are a wonder novelist. I believe you to be the greatest writer that has ever lived, to say nothing of the greatest living. I looked you up in the Encyclopædia Britannica — It gives a bald poor account of your career! It said that "Jude" was your most unpopular work!!! And I think "Jude" to be an immortal book. — the fools!! (I beg your pardon).

I could go down on my knees, before such greatness and consummate genius as yours, — and I mean it. This is how I came to discover you. — I was

Fig. 33. Letter from Thomas X Lewis to Hardy (17 May 1926: 1). Dorset County Museum archive, H.3886.

Hardy's fiction so often explores characters who either harmonise with or are in some way challenged by their environments, such as Jude and Eustacia. This letter suggests that 'Hardy's psychological insight' was beneficial in helping Lewis to examine his own identity in relation to place. As Pite argues, 'Hardy's writings explore where the regional begins and ends, how local and national impinge on people and their sense of themselves' (9). In a detailed, three-page letter, Lewis identifies with Wessex as a place he has never seen but has vividly imagined from Hardy's descriptions:

One day I hope to work my passage to England and behold with my own eyes so great a man and place. I wish also to take my degree in Engineering. I am only 26 and am more or less a square man in a round hole. (17 May 1926)

Lewis's feelings of displacement in the country where he has grown up come through in this letter. His reading of Hardy appears to be a way of preparing himself for the life he wishes to live in England. Lewis kept a detailed diary during his reading experiences, and in an act that immediately creates a pseudo intimacy between sender and recipient, Lewis enclosed several pages of this diary (Figure 34):

I have just finished reading a novel of Thomas Hardy... It is exactly 9.10pm as I write and my impressions are so inexplicable, so subtle and so productive of a tender sympathy and sadness that sleep has been chased away from my eyelids. (17 May 1926)



*(Extracts from my diary & scrapbook)*

1/9/21.

I have just finished reading a novel of Thomas Hardy "The Woodlanders," is the title of this particular one. It is exactly 9-10 p.m. as I write and my impressions of the novel are so inexplicable, so subtle and so productive of a tender sympathy and sadness that sleep has been chased away from my eyelids. .... His (Winterborne's) was a pure, undiluted passion, that had nothing in it of the grosser nature seen in temperaments of less finer fibre, - a passion, - so sacred, so true, so nearly approximating to anything that could be sublime on this earth - the devotion of a simple, manly nature, that suffered self-immolation for the dear object of its regard. - too beautiful - too noble for words. Cool, heartless cynic as I am turning out to be, - contemplation of such a love, the like of which I have never come across in the material form - in reality, I mean, - awakes my heart to the romantic ideals of ignorant childhood, whose dreams fancy-woven were once productive of a delightful fairyland.

Thomas Hardy, - in my opinion, in his subtlety, in his art rank high above more boasted novelists of any time or country. I have all along been analysing my impressions, checking them with their direct cause - taking notes mentally registering etc, contrasting cause and effect, - as the wondrously vivid narrative passes in delightful, sad, whimsical, soul stirring episodes before my mental vision, and I have been struck - dumb - founded with the subtle, exquisite art and marvellous psychological insight of T. Hardy. There is one other, who shows this quality - Shakespeare. His (Hardy's) plots are - well, I cannot find words to express their peculiar similarity to tragedies with which the world is full. His inimitable style goes into rare, deep, penetrating, psychological analysis. His characters live. In short his stories are more vivid than everyday scenes and everyday happenings, with this quality as an appendage - while in essence taking of the tragedy, sorrow, unexpectedness of this world, - the utterly sordid is left out. There is enough cynicism in the characters to give them just the right amount on interest, and love - the passion - is exhibited as a more rarefied emotion than its more sordid replica of poor imperfect humanity.

Ivan Turgenev's "dream world" has some approximation to the more practical tone of Hardy's novels.

M.B. - I must get a full collection of all the works of Hardy and Turgenev for perusal as well as the gratifying sense of possession, when I have money, - possibly when I have finished my apprentice time and passed out.

2/9/21 (11.30 p.m.) - I cannot get rid of that sadness - melancholy which enwrapped me like a dark, soft mantle after reading "Woodlanders" - A certain depression, which I am loth to part with, - a certain tension in the strings of my heart, strings &

Fig. 34. Enclosure with Thomas X Lewis's letter to Hardy (17 May 1926). Dorset County Museum archive, H.3886.

What Hardy would have made of this enclosure is difficult to say, but if he did take the time to read the extracts he would have found himself in the closest proximity to his reader through this interior monologue. Lewis acknowledges that his fanatical behaviour might be perceived as the actions of a 'lunatic' but, given the considerable distance, not only in terms of physical distance but also in the sense of cultural experience, it is understandable that the reader sought to close this gap by sharing his own writing.

Lewis did not encounter Hardy during his formal education in India, as he describes only being allowed to study 'dead authors' in the classroom. Classic English writers were taught as a way of ensuring that British values were communicated to the masses but there are conflicting reader accounts about Hardy's visibility in the Indian literature market in the 1920s.<sup>61</sup> Lewis found Hardy's fiction only by chance encounter in a library:

This is how I came to discover you. – I was looking in one day at the free public library and I saw a series of books by T. Hardy. The name meant nothing to me, for I had studied only the lives of dead authors in college – something about the "nice binding" made me choose one, and I did not rest till I had read all the rest. I made enquiries, but nobody seemed to know T. Hardy. (17 May 1925)

The use of the initial and surname 'T. Hardy' conveys the unfamiliarity of the writer in India, in marked contrast to the way in which his full name had become a commodity across Europe. By the 1940s, though, film adaptations of Hardy's novels did much to disseminate the name of the author more widely in India.

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<sup>61</sup> For a detailed discussion of Hardy in India, see Neelanjana Basu's 'Hardy in India'. *The Hardy Review* 16:i, 2014: 20-28

Rena Jackson's examination of how Hardy's prose challenges ideas of a harmonised imperial identity, and Jane Bownas's study *Hardy and Empire*, which seeks to reveal Hardy's cultural relativism through analysis of his placement of characters in imperial colonies, show how Hardy's work can be read as a challenge to dominant ideas of primitivism and civilised societies. For Bownas, Angel Clare is able to re-examine his feelings, beliefs and even morality (2) when he goes to Brazil, a country perceived to be in need of Christian civilisation; in doing so, Hardy implicitly encourages the reader to look for alternative perceptions of other cultures that challenge the dominant discourse. Perhaps for this reason Hardy was perceived as a writer receptive to the literary production of writers in the colonies. In 1924 an unknown Indian writer, M. M. Banaji, sent Hardy a copy of his first novel, largely an autobiographical work, *Sublime Though Blind*, which sought to dispel common misperceptions of 'the lower classes of India' (2). Hardy acknowledged that the book found its way to him, after a misadventure in which the parcel was originally delivered from Bombay to the Isle of Man, and a pencil draft version of his reply exists in the archive. Connecting across thousands of miles, the correspondence preserves a link between the two in which Banaji's work is known through his communication with Hardy, though it does not appear to have received critical attention.<sup>62</sup>

*Sublime Though Blind* communicates a realistic depiction of Parsi life and is based on Banaji's own experiences of having been blind for the last seventeen

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<sup>62</sup> As part of the digitisation of the letter collection, a text-encoded version of Banaji's letter could include a link in the mark-up to restore the original enclosure, allowing the reader access to his novel as Hardy would have received it.

years. The preface provides a useful extension to his correspondence with Hardy, as within this he presents a challenge to British texts which gave inaccurate representations of Indian life:

THE ignorance displayed even at the present day on Indian matters by alien in England and over the Continent is so palpable that it cannot but form a subject for jest with us Indians. It is not infrequently displayed in the pages of novels and the leaves of journals. Instances of Bombay being mistaken for Benares, Calcutta for Calicut, Delhi for Dehra Dun, a Hindu for a Mahomedan and a Parsi for a Hindu have not been wanting. A pretty kettle of fish is made of Parsi, Hindu and Mahomedan names, their rites and rituals, their modes and manners. It would be too much to expect, of course, that British Officers when they return to the land of their birth after long and arduous service here would go about explaining and expounding Indian matters to their brethren at Home. We can only rely on Father Time and true writings and versions to remove such misapprehensions and misunderstandings. (2)

Speaking as a voice of authority, and jesting at the mistakes the British officers make in their assumed knowledge of an occupied country, Banaji offers an alternative discourse which presumably he felt Hardy would appreciate and empathise with. In using a reference to 'Father Time' in this preface Banaji seems to imply a common thread of feeling with the author of *Jude*. Certainly there are influences in the work that suggest a close reading of Hardy, particularly in references to 'comradeliness' across different genders and races. Banaji is keen to explain that 'if this story be read in an English or foreign clime let the reader remember that it is an Indian story, the scene of which has been laid in busy Bombay, the "Urbs prima in India", and the second city in the whole of the British Empire' (3). In sending Hardy a copy of his book, Banaji must have hoped that his message would be read and disseminated among British literary circles.



By the 1920s, Hardy was receiving unmanageable numbers of manuscripts from aspiring writers seeking support and a connection with Hardy. However, in many cases these manuscripts have become separated from their epistles and lost. For instance, a 'young Syrian man' J. M. Baroodi wrote to Hardy in 1927, having previously sent a manuscript, and expressing concern for the whereabouts of his work:

If the MSS are still unread please do not trouble yourself with them. If you will return them to me I shall be much obliged and indebted to your kindness. (25 May 1927)

A pencil draft reply on the top of Baroodi's letter indicates that this was 'Unanswered. The MS could not be found, & was probably returned. July 1927'. While this letter serves as just one example of many failed attempts to make a real connection with Hardy, this particular correspondent is interesting as Baroodi went on to make a name for himself not in literary circles but in the international political system. This appears to be the J. M. Baroodi that became a prominent member of the UN as Deputy Permanent Representative for Saudi Arabia. While records refer to Ambassador Jamil M. Baroodi as being of Lebanese origin, it is plausible that when writing to Hardy Baroodi would have identified himself as Syrian because it was only after the First World War that the map was redrawn and Lebanon was no longer regarded as Greater Syria. In an interview recorded for the New York Public Radio on 26 September 1968, Baroodi declared that he had been a 'pan Arab since [he] was fourteen years old' and explained that it was his dream 'to unify all of the Arab states'.

There is no evidence that Baroody ever published any of his earlier literary writings, and no records exist to suggest what he wrote about. However, in his letter to Hardy he indicates that he felt an affinity with Hardy's philosophy:

I possess all your books and like the Bible I read them over and over again and always find something new. Your philosophy is the most comprehensive one I ever came across. (25 May 1927)

As such, it suggests that Hardy's work in some ways helped to shape Ambassador Baroody's outlook on life and politics. Described by *Time* magazine as a man who 'derails trains of thought, discomfits the orthodox, and disrupts debate' (13 Dec 1971), it is unfortunate that Baroody did not enjoy any real communication with Hardy. Baroody held the longest association with the United Nations, being present at the first UN General Assembly in 1946; this one letter in the archive gives an indication of the wide networks of influence that connected Hardy to the younger generation in the twentieth century.

## 6.2 Translating Hardy

Those who took it upon themselves to produce translations of Hardy's work also created a more dynamic reader-writer relationship which can be seen as an extension of the emerging fan culture at the turn of the century. Although *Jude* was just as heavily criticised in Germany, Hardy was pleased that the first translation by Adele Berger, in 1897, was a full literal translation without 'mutilation' or 'abridgment' (LW 60). Writing in 1922, Dr L. H. Wolf told Hardy that he was 'deeply impressed by this novel' and was keen to make his work more accessible to the German people through further translations, arguing that, in a post-war context:

German people, seduced by their leaders, disappointed of their hopes, excluded from all goods of the World, tortured by the political state of affairs – in my opinion have only one way to get rid of the cruelties of actual life, that is the way back to their own geniuses and to the geniuses of all nations and times. (2 July 1922)

It is this sort of appreciative letter that Hardy might have been tempted to reply to, speaking as it does of a common humanity and interconnectedness that can be experienced through literature. However, there is no record of a reply. For this particular correspondent there was greater cause for feelings of intimacy than for most of his fans and admirers. Wolf wrote, 'I lived as a prisoner of war many months at Dorchester without knowing how close I was to the great poet' (2 July 1922).

Fan letters allowed readers to reach Hardy through the postal network. While some aspects of celebrity culture may have overwhelmed him, the preservation of so many readers' letters in the archive suggests that Hardy did value them.

They are evidence of his global significance. As Richardson notes:

Hardy's work had a global resonance through its physical setting no less than its subject matter. The geographical range of the novels is spectacular not only on account of the countries referenced, but also through the evocation of interstellar spaces. The inhabitants of Wessex move in a space criss-crossed with international communication and trade. ('Global Hardy' 123-124)

While Hardy may not have been able to reply to all of his readers, he retained the material objects, and therefore their communication was successful.

## 7. Conclusions

In this thesis I have approached the letters Hardy received as both objects and narratives, taking into consideration aspects of genre, form and materiality. I have explored how epistolary communication affected and influenced relationships between Hardy and his friends, younger writers and his readers. Despite the presence of failed communication as a trope in his works, my research has shown that letter exchanges formed an essential part of Hardy's friendships, not simply as a supplement to face-to-face encounters but as a way of opening up an alternative space to develop bonds between the public and the private spheres. I have argued that the writing and reading of personal letters are co-operative processes that produce co-constructed liminal selves.

Along with the companion digitisation project, this thesis opens up greater understanding of, and access to, the letter collection for researchers, students and museum visitors. Photography, text encoding and the creation of an eXist database have occurred concurrently with the research, with mutually beneficial outcomes. Kathryn Sutherland and Elena Pierazzo (2016) note that, within the field of digital humanities, 'as knowledge of the object deepens within the context of the project in general and the editorial work in particular, so it is to be expected that the initial model will need to be refined many times over' (195).

The duality of the work has allowed me to fully appreciate the extent to which the Hardy archive is not a preservation site for a single author but, rather, a

multi-voice repository. It has retained the epistolary voices, material traces, personal narratives and individual identities of hundreds of people who either wrote to Hardy, or are referenced in the letters of others. I have challenged the traditional approach of creating single-author letter collections, as in the case of Hardy's published letters to Florence Henniker, and argued for a dialogic approach that is facilitated by digital methods. Future investigation, which also develops a platform for Hardy's fan letters to become more easily discoverable, might produce results about the personal histories of these individuals through interaction with present-day online communities.

This thesis reaches its conclusion at a point when all of the letters in the main collection have been digitised; digital humanities work is ongoing to develop understanding and discoverability of the networks and dialogues that have emerged through this research. Further steps will now be taken to make the material openly accessible. I end, then, at a junction, where I have been afforded greater proximity to the collection for an intensive period and, in so doing, reduced the distance between the physical archive and its twenty-first-century readers. When Dorset County Museum re-opens in 2020, after its Heritage Lottery Funding (HLF) refurbishment, visitors will be able to access a digitally interactive selection of one hundred letters, and a greater range of the original letters will also be displayed. These developments will mark a shift in the way Hardy is presented through the Museum's interpretation, by, for example, providing greater insight into his involvement in animal welfare reform.

Given my focus on reconstructing dialogues between Hardy and his correspondents, it would perhaps have been fitting to make the year of Hardy's death, in 1928, as a natural end point to his correspondence. However, this is also a transitional stage, as condolence letters highlight the possibility of bridging a gap between the deceased and the grieving friends and relatives left behind. As a sub-genre, condolence letters have very specific codes and conventions. Those composed in the post-Victorian era still often retained the ritualism that developed as part of Victorian mourning culture. George Bernard Shaw wrote to Florence that he was reading *The Dynasts* shortly after Hardy's death, and feeling that 'there is a very great thing gone from my reach' (16 February 1928). While condolence letters are written to surviving spouses and relatives, they function to immortalise the deceased, who becomes the object of the letter. Shaw defined 'T. H' as 'the most honourable stopping place I've ever found' (16 February 1928). Descriptions of the person attempt to bring them to life through memory and anecdote, meaning that an otherwise absent epistolary self still exists, constructed by the writer and sustained by the reader through shared frames of reference. As Pat Jalland (1996) explains, while 'the primary function of condolence letters was the offer of affection, sympathy, and support from family, friends and the community' (308), 'memory was also an important source of consolation for the bereaved [...] and it was given prominence in most condolence letters' (310). While Jalland argues for their therapeutic value, Shaw, even in his own condolence letter, declares that 'these letters to the person left behind when someone dies are such vain, inadequate things' (16 April 1928).

Two days after Hardy's death, the *Times* reported that '[a] large number of messages have been received at Max Gate, Dorchester, expressing sympathy with Mrs. Hardy and admiration and regard for her late husband' (13). To signify Hardy's national importance, the *Times* chose to reprint this letter from King George V:

The Queen and I are grieved to hear of the sad loss that you have sustained by the death of your distinguished husband, a loss that will be shared by his countrymen, in whose literature his name will live permanently. (13)

By also printing Florence's reply (Figure 35), the newspaper preserved the dialogue and allowed the public to participate in her private act of mourning. This transformation of personal correspondence into press information makes for a starker example of how the boundaries between public and private can become blurred. Hardy was claimed as a national figure, and mourning moved beyond the confines of friends and family into a public expression.

## THE DEATH OF MR. HARDY.

### BURIAL IN THE ABBEY.

#### THE DEAN'S CONSENT.

### ROYAL MESSAGES.

The Dean of Westminster, who was approached yesterday by friends of Mr. Thomas Hardy, gave his consent at once to the burial of his ashes in the Abbey. The fact was made known during the afternoon to Mrs. Hardy, who gratefully accepted the proposal. It has accordingly been arranged that the service shall be at 2 o'clock on Monday afternoon.

(From Our Correspondent.)

DORCHESTER, JAN. 12.

A large number of messages have been received at Max Gate, Dorchester, expressing sympathy with Mrs. Hardy and admiration and regard for her late husband. The following message was received from Sandringham:—

The Queen and I are grieved to hear of the sad loss that you have sustained by the death of your distinguished husband, a loss that will be shared by all his countrymen, in whose literature his name will live permanently. We offer you our deep sympathy in your sorrow.—GEORGE R.I.

Mrs. Hardy replied:—

"I respectfully thank your Majesties for your gracious sympathy and am deeply touched by your Majesties' kind tribute to my husband in my sore sorrow."

The Prince of Wales from London telegraphed:—"Please accept my deepest sympathy in your great loss."

Mrs. Hardy replied:—"I am deeply grateful for your Royal Highness's sympathy."

The news of the great writer's death has been received with the greatest grief in Dorchester, with which town and its institutions Mr. Hardy had intimately associated himself. Mrs. Hardy, who is bearing her sorrow bravely, is supported by the presence of her sister and also by one of Mr. Hardy's oldest friends, Mr. Cotterell, of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

Fig. 35. *The Times* (London, England), Friday 13 January 1928; pg. 13; Issue

44789.



In the same press piece, Edmund Gosse decided to share his final correspondence with Hardy, sent to him on Christmas Day, 1927:

Sir – Readers of *The Times* will certainly be interested to learn that I have the best authority for saying that the only word written by Mr. Thomas Hardy during the six weeks of his last illness was concerned with the noble poem which appeared in your column on Christmas Eve.<sup>63</sup> It was a letter written to myself in pencil. It is so characteristic of the serenity of his mind and of that tranquillity which had become the central quality of his nature that I venture to transcribe it nearly in full: –

“Dear Edmund Gosse:

I must thank you for your very kind letter as well as I can. I am in bed on my back, living on butter-broth & beef tea, the servants being much concerned at my not being able to eat any Christmas pudding, though I am rather relieved.

As to those verses in the *Times* you inquire about & gratify me by liking, I can only go by the dates attached in fixing their history: the poem having been begun in 1905 (possibly when I was in the Elgin Room, though I don't remember being there) & then abandoned, & not finished till last year. ...

Best wishes to you & your house for the New Year — & believe me<sup>64</sup>

Always your sincere

T. H.” (13)

By choosing to print Hardy's description of lying in bed and 'living on butter-broth and beef tea', Gosse allows the reader to experience a greater intimacy with a beloved writer than they would have been afforded through other channels. The sharing between friends of a humorous aside about Christmas pudding is transformed into a public anecdote. It exposes a vulnerability that Hardy could no longer have agency over. The act of making this letter publicly available can be understood as a hangover of Victorian sentiment in which the last objects touched or created by the deceased are given special significance.

---

<sup>63</sup> 'Christmas at the Elgin Room' (1927)

<sup>64</sup> This is how the letter appears in the *Times* but in the original the final 'e' of 'Believe me' is omitted.

Similarly, in a public tribute printed further on in the same *Times* piece, G. H. Thring, Secretary of the Authors Playwrights and Composers Incorporated Society, celebrated that: 'We have what must be considered a priceless treasure – Thomas Hardy's last signature. He wrote it yesterday on a cheque which included his subscription for this society' (13). While there is something referential about this, it borders a new terrain in which Hardy becomes more of a commodity in death. This also occurs in Gosse's contribution, as he writes that, '[i]n spite of the circumstances in which this pencil note was written, the handwriting is as clear, virile and elegant as I have known it through more than 50 years of an inestimable friendship' (13). The significance attributed to a person's handwriting was as an extension of the self, creating a sense of presence, which appears heightened here. Gosse testifies to Hardy's strength and energy, while also making a public affirmation regarding his friendship with such an acclaimed writer.

What remains private is the last paragraph of Hardy's letter:

I am sorry to hear of your cold on the chest — whatever you do, don't go out against an east wind. I think my aches are diminishing. J.M.M. called here last week, but I did not see him. F. says he is much more cheerful, & he & his young wife are both hoping she will get well again, but the doctors say it is next to impossible —

(25 December 1927, *CL* 7:89)

Here there is the familiar correspondence between two elderly friends, with Gosse admitting in his reply that he has been 'laid up with a bronchial cold' while being quite anxious to hear of Hardy's chill. The reference to John Middleton Murry ('J. M. M.') illustrates a network of mutual acquaintances.

However, Gosse determines what to retain and what to omit in the published form, meaning his role shifts from personal correspondent to news editor.

Additional public tributes included one from Arthur Quiller-Couch, who captured the contrast between being connected to Hardy publicly, and knowing him personally, in his avowal that: 'I am proud to have known this great man as a friend' (13). In contrast, John Galsworthy, another close friend of Hardy, and one of his pallbearers, chose to provide a series of noun phrases for public consumption: 'The chief of English letters'; 'a great poet' and 'a staunch guardian of the integrity of literature' (13). While such phrases position Hardy within the literary past, both Quiller-Couch and Gwen Ffrangcon Davis, who had played the character of Tess on the stage, place Hardy alongside the younger generation, sustaining a sense of presence, even in absence:

Hardy's greatest achievement, perhaps, was that his genius, simple and sincere, bestrode the War and kept the fairway open for the tide of great tradition to join with youth. (Quiller-Couch 13)

He was one of those who belonged to the company of the young. His mind was fresh and vigorous, with no trace of an old man's outlook. I spoke to him as to a contemporary. (Ffrangcon-Davis 13)

Hardy's death is also a significant end point for this work on distance and proximity, as it has been well documented that Hardy was subject to a controversial double burial. During two simultaneous funerals in Dorset and London, on Monday 16 January 1928, Hardy's ashes were buried in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey, while his heart was placed in the grounds of St Michael's Church in Stinsford. This went against Hardy's own wishes to be laid to rest in his home county. Hardy as object, as a symbol of national pride, is

what made his literary executors, Sydney Cockerell and J. M. Barrie, demand such pomp and ceremony. It was one last moment when his fans could generate a perceived intimacy by lining the streets to participate in his funeral. Hardy's pallbearers included some of his most long-standing male literary friends,— Edmund Gosse, Rudyard Kipling, George Bernard Shaw, John Galsworthy, A. E. Housman and J. M. Barrie — as well as the Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, and Ramsey Macdonald, as representation of the government. Sassoon's absence was notable; the younger writer had decried the decision to go against the terms set out in Hardy's will and, whether in protest or distress, he refused to attend the service at the Abbey.

Shaw wrote to Florence immediately after the event in a way that made Hardy a living presence at his own funeral, while also playing on ideas Hardy explored in his poetry about spectres and hauntings:

It was a fine show; and I tried to look as solemn as possible; but I didn't feel solemn a bit. I rejoice in Hardy's memory; and I felt all the time that he was there – up in the lectern somewhere – laughing like anything at Kipling and me and Galsworthy and the rest of us. Probably he shook hands with Handel at the end: his only link with that sort of thing now. (16 January 1928)

There is lightness in this letter which is perhaps a more effective, and certainly a less conventional, approach to the therapeutic benefits of condolence. Shaw does not offer a description of what Hardy was, or how he will be remembered. Resisting the conventional tone of a traditional condolence letter, and perhaps working to shake off some of the heavy trappings of Victorian mourning, Shaw goes on to joke that he had wanted to 'make you come off, with him, to see a Charlie Chaplin film!'. He draws to a close with a celebratory expression that acknowledges how his words flout convention: 'Hooray! It's not proper; but

that's how he makes me feel'. While it is not socially expected, Shaw seems to be arguing that it is a more fitting way to honour the memory of Hardy, and their shared experiences with him, as summed up in the interrogative, 'what an adventure it was, wasn't it?' (16 January 1928).

## 7.1 Beyond the main collection

This thesis has focused on the letters that Hardy received during his lifetime. Largely these were letters delivered to his Dorchester home, Max Gate. Weber and Weber note in their *Descriptive Checklist*: 'Hardy died on 11 January 1928. Thereafter only two letters survived the bonfire tended by Mrs Hardy in the Max Gate garden' (210). The two letters are listed as being from Howard Bliss in February 1929 and John Galsworthy in August 1933, although Galsworthy died in the January of this year, and the letter in the archive is written by his wife, Ada. Nevertheless, the *Descriptive Checklist* was published in 1968 and the archive has grown since then, with additional letters from the acquisition of two private collections. These include letters to Florence from J. M. Barrie, Owen Seaman and George Bernard Shaw. As a result, this end point becomes a moment of transition, when the focus changes from the connections Hardy maintained through correspondence, to Florence's epistolary friendships.

Some of the letters Florence received after 1928 are singular – but these show how Hardy's conversations were temporarily maintained by a correspondent's ability to continue to write to his wife instead. For example, Virginia Woolf wrote

in 1932 'to say how greatly it pleases me to learn that you liked my article on Mr Hardy's novels in The Times supplement' (21 July 1932).

Ada Galsworthy's reason for corresponding in 1933 was to thank Florence for lending her letters to Hardy, written by her husband John Galsworthy, who had died that year. Ada's letter reads as an act of female solidarity, as she writes knowing that Florence can empathise with her in 'such strange unknown waters, as those of "literary representative"' (10 August 1933). Given that Hardy's biography had appeared under Florence's name by this point (and she had had an editing hand in the two volumes), Ada positions herself below Florence, affording Hardy's widow much higher status: 'I am sure you must be very much better at this than I can ever be. No one ever started such work with so little aptitude as myself' (10 August 1933).

Her letter is also fittingly poignant with its focus on perceived proximity in epistolary dialogue; she comments on the feeling of intimacy that the archivist, biographer or researcher has when handling correspondence between two other persons:

One gets a strange sort of communion by looking at (and very oddly) by typing these letters. I imagine I have typed somewhere near 1000 by now! Perhaps more. I daresay in most cases the biographer will merely absorb them and derive an atmosphere from them, but some will be very valuable material as they stand. (10 August 1933)

Beyond this, there are sustained dialogues between Florence and Shaw and Florence and J. M. Barrie which can be reconstructed by reference to the published *Letters of Emma and Florence Hardy* (1996), alongside the incoming letters in the archive. Correspondence from Barrie is retained in the archive as a bundle, tied with a green ribbon. Claire Tomalin (2002) suggests that Florence

might have at one point considered a relationship between herself and Barrie. Further investigation of their epistolary communication could focus on elements of heterosocial friendship in a way that complements the reflections and observations made in chapter two. Similarly, there is a considerable body of correspondence between Florence and T.E. Lawrence that supplements the main collection.

Florence, as epistolarian, was a more candid writer than her husband. In a private letter to Edward Clodd in 1913 she apologised for using a typewriter but justified the use of the mechanical aid because she admitted: 'I want to ramble on, and say ever so much'. In this letter she discusses her frustrations over the elaborate mourning rituals for Emma, in which she has been told to 'always wear half mourning in future, as a mark of devotion to her memory', as well as disclosing the troubles caused by Emma's niece staying at Max Gate (emphasis in original). Unlike so many of Hardy's letters, these are of the most personal nature, and there are frequent references to the furtiveness of her communicative act: 'Please don't tell anyone'; 'I am so ashamed of letting out like this' (28).

A focus on Florence at the centre of networks of communication would also bring into consideration the role of the telephone as a technological advancement beyond the letter and telegram. By 1920, Hardy was able to inform Gosse that a telephone had been installed at Max Gate but that he was 'uncallable, not being able to hear what is said', and in another letter to Edward Clodd, Hardy asserted that he had 'nothing to do with it', but that it allowed

Florence to maintain contact with people in London in a way that suggests an enhanced perception of proximity to that of postal communication: 'This is not quite like seeing their faces, but makes the city seem curiously near us' (21 December 1920, *CL* 6: 56). Mark Ford (2016) notes that '[t]he war effectively put an end to Hardy's habit of making regular visits to London' (259). Given that Florence's own life-writing often suggests a sense of isolation at Max Gate, future research might investigate to what extent such isolation was mitigated by telephone and epistolary conversation.

Similarly, letters provided a way of re-connecting Hardy with London when he chose to feel most disconnected. Writing to Florence Henniker in 1915 and then again in 1917, he confessed:

I dislike being there more and more, especially with the incessant evidences of this ghastly war under one's eyes everywhere in the streets and no power to do anything. (25 May 1915, *CL* 5: 99)

[T]he war has taken all enterprise out of me and I have almost registered a vow that I will not see London till the butchery is over. (20 May 1917, *CL* 5: 214)

However, through the multiplicity of voices commenting on war-time London in letters to Hardy, he was still immersed in a factual, anecdotal and sensorial way. A new avenue of investigation would be to examine how news from the city filtered through in personal correspondence differently from public, published sources. Newspaper clippings in Hardy's scrapbooks would serve as a useful point of comparison. As Ralph Elliott observes:

In [his] letters we can listen to Hardy talking about the years of war: the Zeppelin raids on London; the police in remote Wessex 'getting stricter about illuminated windows' (V, p.154); submarines about the shore of Portland; petro rationing and other economies [...] (219)



Reactions to the Zeppelin feature at various points in Hardy's correspondence. Florence Henniker was living near London, so Hardy was particularly fearful for his friend: 'We almost wish you were not in Kent, as you may be in the track of some Zeppelin on its way to London' (168). In June 1916, Hardy suggested to Henniker that 'I daresay you get rumours of war news which don't reach us here' (28 June 1916, *CL* 5: 166). However, in his next letter, in September, he informs her that:

The morning papers have this moment arrived, telling us that a Zeppelin was brought down near London on Saturday. The war news is exciting almost every day: but I think our papers rather too sanguine. We have not beaten the Germans by any means yet. (4 September 1916, *CL* 5: 176)

Hardy may have seen the front cover of the *Daily Mirror* that morning: 'Blazing Zeppelin crashes to Earth near Enfield: "Most Formidable Attack on this Country"' (Figure 36)]. The language of the headline draws on people's fears of alien attacks in a way that recalls H. G. Wells' *War of the Worlds*. The 1916 Enfield crash was seen as a significant defeat because the German airships posed such a threat – 'bring down the Zeppelins and the war was won' was very much the sentiment of the news coverage at this time. Hardy's letter to Henniker reflects a more cautious outlook.

The letters I have examined in this thesis have predominantly been from friends and fans, given my focus on epistolary relationships. However, there is further scope to draw on the letters to examine new insights, not only with regard to Hardy and World War I, but more generally Hardy's engagement in political discussion. This forms the subject of Angelique Richardson's forthcoming monograph *The Politics of Thomas Hardy*.

That the archive holds so many letters to Hardy, on so many themes and topics, is in part owing to Rowland Hill's postal reform and the revolution of the penny post; it is also owing to Hardy's eagerness and willingness to connect with others on a global scale, as well as to the value placed on letters during Hardy's lifetime, and his own meticulous manner of preserving his correspondence. The Belgian Francophone novelist, Fabienne Claire Nothomb, who writes under the name Amélie Nothomb (2003), describes correspondence as 'a form of writing devoted to another person' (21); this thesis has examined the many ways in which people constructed letters devoted to Hardy. For Nothomb, '[n]ovels, poems, and so on, [are] texts into which others [are] free to enter, or not', whereas letters do not 'exist without the other person [...] their very mission, their significance, [is] the epiphany of the recipient' (21). This thesis has offered insights into the significance of the letters Hardy received during his lifetime. This exploration of the practice and experience of writing to an epistolary Hardy makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the novelist and poet.



Fig. 36. *Daily Mirror*, Monday 4 September 1916, reproduced by Alamy.

## Appendix A: Letter Transcript Examples

A sample of one hundred letters has been transcribed in Oxygen, software that supports text-encoding, as part of the project that accompanies this thesis.

These transcripts will be made accessible via an online eXist database.



The database is work-in-progress and is currently only accessible at the University of Exeter:

<http://humrestest01.ex.ac.uk:8080/exist/apps/hardyletters/index.html>

Examples of transcripts are included in this appendix, copied from the online database. They are currently in draft form. A process of proofreading by multiple readers will be undertaken before the database is made publicly accessible in June 2019.

- Names of people and organisations appear in bright blue and feature markup that takes the user to biographical entries within the database and link to Wikipedia and other authority files online.

Digitising letters to Thomas Hardy

**Biographical details:**

**Virginia Woolf**  
née Virginia Stephen

Occupation: **Modernist writer**

Born: **Kensington** (1882-01-25)

Died: **River Ouse, Sussex** (1941-03-28)

Virginia Woolf's father, Leslie Stephen, was one of the earliest editors of Hardy's work, accepting *Far From the Madding Crowd* to be serialised in the *Cornhill Magazine* (published by Smith, Elder & Co), and *The Hand of Ethelberta* and of his novels at *The Cornhill Magazine*, and was a close friend of Hardy's.

**Linked Open Data Sources**

1. Virtual International Authority File (VIAF): [39385478](#)

**General References**

1. Wikipedia: [Virginia Woolf](#)

**Letters**

1. [dhe-hl-h.5954] Letter from Virginia Woolf to Thomas Hardy, to express appreciation, 17th Jan 1915  
2. [dhe-hl-h.5955] Letter from Virginia Woolf, asking him to write something for, 17th May 1923

**Data extracted from the British National Bibliography**

Identifier: <http://bnb.data.bl.uk/id/person/WoolfVirginia1882-1941>

Selected recent works and/or editions:

- Names of places appear in green and feature markup that takes the user to geolocations and link to Google Maps.
- Titles of literary works appear in blue and feature markup that takes the user to bibliographical entries.
- Transcripts appear alongside high resolution images of the original letters.
- The user can search by accession number, date sender, receiver, or any word contained within the letter.
- Unclear words are indicated by the use of square brackets.

## 1. Transcripts relating to chapter one

Please refer to:

Fig. 9a. Letter from Edmund Gosse to Hardy (22 March 1887: 1). Dorset County Museum archive, H.2712.

Fig. 9b. Letter from Edmund Gosse to Hardy (22 March 1887: 2-3). Dorset County Museum archive, H.2712.

### H. 2712

[Page 1]

29. Delamere Terrace  
Westborne Square W.

22.3.87

My dear Hardy,

Very many thanks for the gift of "The Woodlanders".

I was so much disgusted with the way the critics treated "The Mayor" that I have ^gone^ in this time for an arrant piece of log-rolling. I have persuaded the "Saturday Review" to let me [notice] the "Woodlanders" & I have stirred up Coventry

[Page 2]

Patmore to make the same attempt in the St. James's Gazette. If he succeeds you will have, at all events, two conscientious reviewers. Last time it did not seem to me that you had one.

I have formed an idea that Little Hintock is more or less a study of Mintern Parva. I dare say I am quite wrong. I wonder if Buckbury-Fitzpiers is not a kind of hybrid between Okeford-Fitzpaine & Buckland-Newton? Of course Sherton Abbas is Sherborne? If one of these guesses is wrong, they all are, for they fit together like a puzzle.

Your book is one of the most beautiful that you have written. The first volume starts off rather stiffly, but the second is superb, as warm and rich as a Titian. I have not yet read the third.

Ever sincerely yours

Edmund Gosse

How many details have I already heard from your lips!





## Sherborne

Latitude / Longitude: 50.947993 -2.514492

### Linked Open Data Sources

1. Geonames: [2638033](#)

### General References

1. Wikipedia:

### Letters

1. [dhe-hl-h.2712] Letter from Edmund Gosse, about The Woodlanders, 22nd March 1887



Please refer to:

Fig. 8. Letter from Gosse to Hardy (28 August 1887: 2-3). Dorset County Museum archive, H.2713.

## H.2713

[Page 1]

29, Delamere Terrace,  
Westbourne Square.W.

28.8.87

My dear [Hardy](#)

A Chicago friend of mine, who is a great admirer of [Barnes](#) desires to contribute to the Memorial. May he send his cheque direct to you, & so have done with it, for he is travelling, & would like to finish the matter straight away?

[Robert Louis Stevenson](#) is off to [Colorado](#) as a last chance. I saw him the day before he sailed. The only book

[Page 2]

he seemed to be taking along with him was [The "Woodlanders."](#) He spoke with warmth of you.

I hope your spirits have been pretty good this summer. I have been scarcely fit for human society, I have been so deep in the dumps. I wonder whether climate has anything to do with it? It is the proper thing nowadays to attribute

[Page 3]

to physical causes all the phenomena which people used to call spiritual. But I am not sure. One may be dyspeptic and yet perfectly cheerful, and yet not fit company for a church-yard worm. For the last week I should not have ventured to say unto the louse "thou art my sister."

[Page 4]

I [believe] I am going away at last. I am right sick of [London](#). I hope to get into [Devonshire](#) on the 10<sup>th</sup>. I wish it was [Dorsetshire](#): not merely because of [Max Gate](#), but because of the two counties I vastly prefer the heatherier and breezier one.

Our united kindest regards to [M<sup>rs</sup> Hardy](#). I am always, my dear friend

yours sincerely

[Edmund Gosse](#)



Please refer to:

Fig. 13a. Letter from Gosse to Hardy (1 April 1897: 1). Dorset County Museum archive, H.2722.

Fig.13b. Letter from Gosse to Hardy (1 April 1897: 2-3). Dorset County Museum archive, H.2722.

## H.2722

[Page 1]

29, Delamere Terrace  
Westbourne Square.W.

1.4.97

My dear [Hardy](#)

It was the "[World](#)" which maddened me into taking up the cudgels in "[the St. J.G.](#)" Tell me whether the letter, which I sent you last night, has cheered you up at all? Sheer unjust de-traction does lower one's vitality for the moment; it is an actual poison. My impression is that that review was written by some smart

[Page 2]

feather-headed woman, grinding some axe of her own. If one only knew who wrote these things, very often the whole sting of them would fade away. For instance, the review of "[Tess](#)" which annoyed us all so much, as soon as one found out that [Mrs Andrew Lang](#) had written it, - what did it matter? I dread more than any other

[Page 3]

"sign of the times" the prominence which women are getting in journalism, because women who scribble are always ignorant, generally malevolent, and [entirely] unscrupulous. That responsibility to keep high the standard of the Best, for its own sake, which is the very spirit & blood of an artist-man, seems to

[Page 3]

be incomprehensible to a woman.

Ever yours sincerely

[Edmund Gosse](#)

When, at the end of my second article, I spoke of "the [Amelias](#) & the [Marcias](#)," I meant [Fielding](#)'s & <sup>^</sup>[Mr](#)<sup>s</sup> [Humphry Ward](#)'s, not yours.

## 2. Transcripts relating to chapter two

As the archive contains both sides of the correspondence between Thomas Hardy and Florence Henniker, the database allows the user to read their letters as a dialogue. Previous / next letter links have been built in to facilitate this option.



Please refer to:

Figure 5a. Letter from Hardy to Henniker, 21 December 1913. Dorset County Museum archive, H.3135.

Figure 17b. Letter from Henniker to Hardy, 17 January 1914. Dorset County Museum archive, H. 3175.

Fig. 20. Letter from Florence Henniker to Hardy (10 June 1914: 4). Dorset County Museum archive, H.3178.

**H.3135**

[Page 1]

Max Gate

Dec 21: 1913

My dear friend:

I had reserved my reply to your last kind letter till to-day, in order to make it a Christmas greeting: & now I have a double impulse to write, having received the picture-card & words on it this morning. It seems, so far as I can judge, a very pretty place, but I cannot tell the sub-soil from the view. However I hope it is dry & will suit you.

The new Christmas does not [Page 2] exhilarate me much. But of course I cannot expect it to. The worst of a sad event in middle life & beyond is that one does not recover from the shock as in earlier years; so I simply say to myself of this Christmas, "Yet another!"

The alliance with [Cambridge](#), to which you allude, is pleasing: it gives me a fresh centre of interest, & they are all such nice friends to me there. I am intending to visit it very often, but whether I shall is doubtful.

[Page 3]

I read [Miss Wedmore's poems](#) that you were good enough to send, & liked best those you had marked, as was natural. The half-page in [The Sphere](#) of this week, which I enclose as a sort of Xmas card, gives a few verses I was asked for by the editor, but a periodical is a chilling atmosphere for poems: the mood induced by a newspaper is just the wrong one, & puts them out of tune.

Do you ever see a quarterly magazine called "[Poetry & Drama](#)". It is written by a group of young men whose idea of verse is that [Page 4] nobody has ever known how to write it in the whole history of literature till they came along to show the trick to the world; so it is amusing reading, which I think you would like.

A young lady came this week to photograph me in colour, at the request of a friend of mine. The specimens she showed me were extraordinary in their reality. But I am getting tired of it all. My niece and [Miss Dugdale](#) are here ministering my wants: I don't know what I should do without them, & I am sorry to say that just now [Florence](#) [Page 5] has a bad cold. I want her to stay in bed, but cannot get her to. I do not see many people. [Mrs Sheridan](#) says she is coming but she has not come. [Lady Ilchester](#) is at [Melbury](#), & tells me she will be there if all's well till June. [Mrs Asquith](#) tells me she is ill, & going away - not for a "rest cure" - she is too weak for that she says. ^I am sorry for her^. [Sir H. Herkomer](#) is doing ^films of "[Far from the Madding](#)

Crowd," for the picture palaces: young [Herkomer](#) came here a few days ago to get local colour, [Page 6] & has photographed the real jug used in the malt-house.

There: that is about all the social (& artistic intelligence I can think of - a poor supply. One thing more: did you see my letter in [The Times](#) about performing animals? You may not have done so, & I send it on. But the words "Performing Animals" do not clearly indicate the matter: what I object to in most performances with animals - ^in which they are passive^ - e.g. bringing live canaries, rabbits, pigeons, etc, out of the sleeve or handkerchief. Every spectator can see that the wretched creature is in the greatest misery, & I [Page 7] believe that a great many are "used" in these tricks - that is, tortured to death.

I wonder when I shall see you. Not very soon I suppose: and you have many interests outside my life.

Your affectionate friend

[Tho. H.](#)

H.3175

[Page 1]

The Little Orchard,  
Shoreham,  
Kent

Jan 17. 14

My dear friend.

Best thanks for yr. last nice long letter, full of news. Also very many thanks for the fine poem in the "[Sphere](#)". There are beautiful lines in it. But of course it is very sad.

I have not seen the magazine <sup>^</sup>[conducted]<sup>^</sup> by the "uppish" young poets. Possibly there may be good things in it now & again, for as [M' Gosse](#) thinks there is a great deal of

[Page 2]

almost good verse published. I think [Miss Wedmore's](#) <sup>^</sup>must be<sup>^</sup> very much above the ordinary, don't you? and I see there is a young [Mr Arthur Bell](#) very much praised.

I was really impressed by [Frank Taylor's](#) "[The Gallant Way](#)". They are of course soldier poems & they have a splendid ring & "go" about them. One on "[Minden](#)" - and another on "[Blucher](#)" – & a 3<sup>rd</sup>. about "[The Men](#)

[Page 3]

[Who Lead](#)" are excellent beyond dispute.

What do you think of this craze for "films"? I see you say "[Far from the Madding Crowd](#)" is to be done. I wonder if the system makes people lazy about reading, + less keen about genuine drama?

I am so glad you have written about performing animals. There may be a few cases in which <sup>^</sup>they<sup>^</sup> are kindly treated, & learn tricks easily – (such as Milner's) – but the whole thing is liable to awful abuses & cruelties.

[Page 4]

There are a few things that have happened lately which cheer one. The passing of the Plumage Bill in America, & the rending of the feathers from the hats of callous women delights me. But I fear the inspection of the poor pit ponies is very unsatisfactory – + our [M' McKenna](#) has behaved badly about it.

I hope you are getting fond of the [live] "Wessex"? –

This place, as I think I told you, is quite astonishingly rural. In some of the country roads & lanes one might be a hundred miles from [London](#), instead of 23.

I hear from an old friend, [Lord Channing](#), a very busy politician in old days, that he is now, very sensibly, reading your books. I know he will appreciate much of them very keenly. You ask about the soil – here. It is chalky, & the air, I think very bracing - I hope to do a great deal in encouraging birds in the orchard. Please give many messages to [Miss Dugdale](#) & my love. Someday you & she must come + see me here. – By the way, I went to a little party at [Mr Gosse's](#) — the first I had been to. They were so kind in getting interesting people to come + talk to me. I met [Dr Blander](#), & also went to hear his lecture on "[Hamlet](#)". Many good wishes for 1914.

Y<sup>r</sup> affec friend

[F.H.](#)

H.3138

[Page 1]

Max Gate

Dorchester

11 June 1914

My dear friend:

What a strange thing. This morning when I was dressing it flashed into my mind that I had been going to write to you for several days, & I would do it this very day: when lo, there was a letter from you. This has happened I think once or twice before in our correspondence. Still I suppose I must knock the [Page 2] romance out of it & say it was only coincidence.

We intend to be in London from Wednesday to Saturday next week & we shall I believe be staying at Lady St. Helier's. I was in hopes you were at Stratford Place. I fear there will not be time to run down to you, in the event of her having arranged things to do; but I don't know. I am thinking we may be able, however, to go to [Page 3] London again for a day or two during July, in which case we will make a point of visiting your little orchard. Meanwhile cannot you come here for a week-end or week-middle, just as you choose. I really think you ought to honour Max Gate by sleeping in it just once at any rate. F. will write to you about this. The vein, or veins, do not trouble me, unless I walk too far. How kind of you to bear in mind that [Page 4] inconvenience of mine. I think bicycling was the original cause.

As you ask what I am doing in poetry I am sending the Fortnightly for May, containing the last thing I published. I have a lot of loose poems in MS. which I must, I suppose, collect into a volume. Of course, I shall send you a copy, whenever it comes out.

We are going on very quietly. Florence works at flower-gardening – rather too hard, I think; but she is quite devoted to it. About [Page 5] three weeks ago we motored to Plymouth, partly because I wanted to clear up a mystery as to the Gifford vault there. We came back over Dartmoor. It was cold & the gradients were high, but the views beautiful.

I, too, have felt uneasy about that physiological laboratory. But I suppose one must take the word of the vivisectors as honest when they assure us that they never torture animals. Altogether the world is [Page 6] such a bungled institution from a humane point of view that a grief more or less hardly counts. Wishing one had never come into it or shared in its degrading organisations is but a selfish thought, as others would have been here just the same. But this sounds gloomy to you I know: & I am after all not without hope of much amelioration.

Ever your affect<sup>te</sup> friend

Tho H.

P.S. "Wessex", "Wessie", or "Wess" is thriving, but he is pronounced a spoilt dog. He is fond of other dogs, & w<sup>d</sup>. not object to you bringing Milner. [T.H.](#)

I enclose something else I have lately printed – quite a trifle as you see.



H.3178

[Page 1]

The Little Orchard

Shoreham

Kent

June 10 |14--&gt;

My dear friend:

I stupidly did not realise y<sup>r</sup>. birthday on the anniversary –, but please accept belated, – but very good wishes for many more happy & peaceful birthdays.

I am settled here, I hope, till the end of July, so hope you will both

[Page 2]

come down here some day to luncheon or tea, – or both?

It is only an hour from the South Eastern & Chatham -Victoria – & I am one mile from Shoreham Station.

I hope you have less trouble with the veins in y<sup>r</sup>. leg, & that you may

[Page 3]

be able to mount a hill near this house, (or cottage rather,) & look down upon a really glorious view.

I wonder what you are now doing in the way of writing? Poetry, perhaps?

I heard a sad account, a month or so ago, of the terrible poverty & distress in which poor Stephen Phillips now is. He ought to get a pension from the Treasury.

[Page 4]

I am disgusted with Prince A - of Connaught for opening the new physiological Laboratory at Cambridge, & going out of his way to identify himself with the worst type of vivisector. – I only wish some mad woman w<sup>d</sup>. burn down that place. It is awful to think of all those "private research rooms"–. –

I hope you are getting fond of "Wessex?" Please ask Florence to write to me some day – & tell me all y<sup>r</sup>. news – my best love to her.

Yr aff. friend

FH

### 3. Transcripts relating to chapter three

Please refer to:

Fig. 22. Letter from Siegfried Sassoon to Hardy (24 February 1916). Dorset County Museum archive, H.5131.

H.5131

[Page 1]

1<sup>st</sup> Batt<sup>n</sup>. R.W.[F.]

B.E.F.

Feb. 24<sup>th</sup> 1916

Dear [Mr Hardy](#)

It was a great pleasure to me to receive your letter. The book will be sent to you in a week or two, but I shall not be able to inscribe your name in it owing to my being at these wars.

It is not a cheerful performance, 'coming back again'. I wish I could find a spark of glory in it. But there is none now: only organised destruction, & a general feeling of hopelessness. The Army is one vast Stupidity; one "does one's job" & longs for ignoble comforts. And the humour of the Army, – could anything be more English? But no doubt if I were on [General Haig's](#) staff I should be an optimist!

Everyone believes in the war except the main in the shell hole. But I have just had German measles, & that has probably given me a feeling of sympathy for the enemy.

With all good wishes.

Yours sincerely

[Siegfried Sassoon](#)

Please refer to:

Fig. 24a. Letter from Virginia Woolf to Hardy (17 January 1915: 1). Dorset County Museum archive, H.5954.

**H.5954**

[Page 1]

Mrs Woolf (*Daughter of Leslie Stephen*)

TELEPHONE 496

17 The Green

Richmond

17<sup>th</sup>. Jan. 1915

Dear Mr. Hardy,

I have long wished to tell you how profoundly grateful I am to you for your poems and novels, but naturally it seemed an impertinence to do so. When however, your poem to my father, [Leslie Stephen](#), appeared in [Satires of Circumstance](#) this autumn, I felt that I might perhaps be allowed to thank you for that at least. That poem, & the reminiscences you contributed to [Professor Maitland's Life](#) of him, remains in my mind as incomparably the truest & most imaginative portrait of him in existence, for which alone his children should be always grateful to you.

But besides this one would like to

[Page 2]

thank you for the magnificent work which you have already done, & are still to do. The younger generation, who care for poetry [&] literature, owe you an immeasurable debt, & in particular for your last volume of poems which, to me at any rate, is the most remarkable book to appear in my life time.

I wrote only to satisfy a very old desire &, not to trouble you to reply.

Believe me

yours sincerely

[Virginia Woolf](#)

Please refer to:

Fig. 25a. Letter from Ezra Pound to Hardy, (13 November 1920). Dorset County Museum, H.4814.

Fig. 25b. Hardy's pencil draft reply to Ezra Pound's letter (13 November 1920). Dorset County Museum, H.4814.

## H.4814

[Page 1]

*For subscriptions, etc. refer to F.B. Neumayer, 70, Charing Cross Road, W.C. 2. 2/6 one copy; yearly subscription 25/-*

13-11-1920.

Agency

5, HOLLAND PLACE CHAMBERS  
LONDON, W.8.

Thomas Hardy: O.M.

Dear Mr Hardy:

I am sending you today the November issue of [THE DIAL](#) in the hope of convincing you that it is a suitable place for your work to appear, for [America](#).

The company is at least as good as is to be found in any other current publication. The [Gourmont](#) and [Morland](#) are taken from mss. which have not yet been published in French.

I think also you will find our rates of payment as high as those of other periodicals .. in any case it is quite easy for you or your agent to demand what you like.

Hoping, in my "official capacity" for the honour of your collaboration; and asking as a private person that you accept an expression of my long-standing admiration of your poetry and of your prose, and in especial of [The Mayor of Casterbridge](#) and the [Noble Dames](#) :

[belong or believe] me yours very sincerely

[Ezra Pound](#)

T.O.

[Page 2]

**Draft reply by Thomas Hardy**

Nov 28. 1920

[Ans]....Have been searching, but have not found one that will really suit.  
However, will hunt again.

#### 4. Transcript relating to chapter four

Please refer to:

Fig. 31a. Letter from Louise Moog to Hardy (5 July 1927:1). Dorset County Museum archive, H.4605.

Fig. 31b. Letter from Louise Moog to Hardy (5 July 1927: 2-3). Dorset County Museum archive, H.4605.

[Page 1]

The Hague

July 5th. 1927

Dear Mr. Thomas Hardy,  
Author of "Tess of the D' Urbervilles,

May I introduce my-self to you, I am a Dutch girl, who just finished your above mentioned work and I cannot resist the desire to tell you how that work has moved me, how deep an impression it made upon me.

I've never read a book in which I felt something of my self as in your so well-painted -Tess.

I think Tess character so beautiful, it is never weak, she always gives and never asks. I think it so lovely of her, when cruel Angel has let her alone, Tess makes herself ugly and when then somebody says "What a mommet of a maid" she says "I don't care - - - but I love him

[Page 2]

just the same."-

And after all I think it not a crime when she kills that vile wretch, and not at all a crime which ought to be punished - and not at all punished in that way. -

That killed fellow was the cause of all - the cause of her miserable life (and in the same time so beautiful life) - and were not the parents indeed the cause of all?

Who deserved punishment? Tess least of all.

I think life so difficult and several troubles I have had, I met in this book. Oh, I wish that there are more people in the world as you are, for you understand a woman.-

"[Tess](#)" is the first book I read of you - and I hope to read soon more of you. -

Many, many thanks for "[Tess](#)", what beautiful descriptions of nature it contains and I hope that you live somewhere in [England](#) where nature is lovely and

[Page 3]

life may be so much better than in a great town. I wish you were my grandfather.

May I shake hands with you?

Sincerely yours

[Louise Moog](#).

## 5. Transcript relating to chapter five

Please refer to:

Fig. 32. Letter from Marie Flower to Hardy (6 March 1925: 1). Dorset County Museum archive, H. 2410.

[Page 1]

Girls' High School  
Lytham Road  
Blackpool

6.3.25.

Dear [Mr Hardy](#),

I'm very sorry to trouble you, but I have been wondering whether you can tell me where the "[Cliff without a name](#)" is. It appears on the maps, and as far as I remember it is mentioned in [Tess of The D'Urbervilles](#).

I am very interested in it as I live in [Bude](#), and know that particular part of the coast fairly well.

[Page 2]

Hoping I am not giving you a great deal of trouble.

I remain,

Yours Sincerely

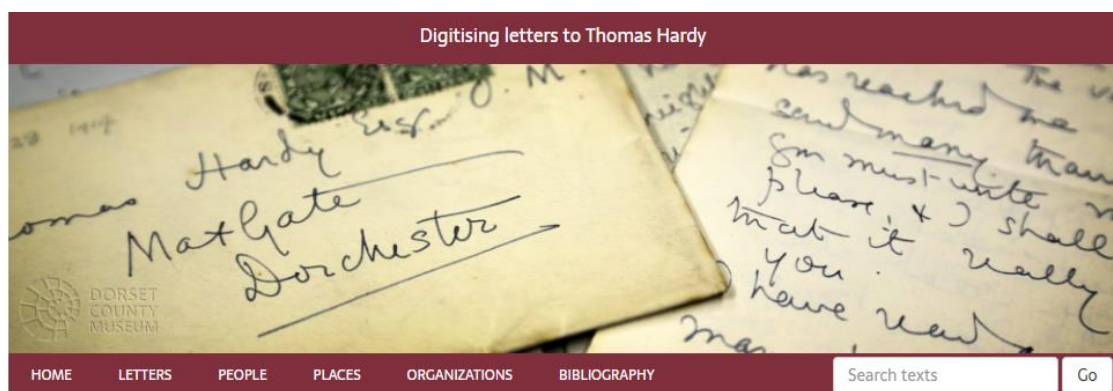
[Marie Flower](#).



## Draft reply by May O'Rourke

The "[Cliff without a name](#)"^ ^in [A Pair of Blue Eyes](#)^, so far as it is anywhere , is near [Beeny](#), about a mile from [Boscastle](#). See [Mr Hardy](#)'s "[Collected Poems](#)"; 1 vol. (Macmillan & Co publishers).

-----  
Sec<sup>d</sup>.

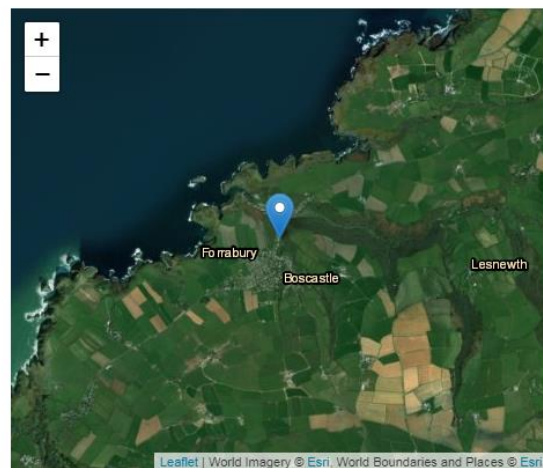


### Boscastle

Latitude / Longitude: 50.687291 -4.693040

#### Letters

1. [dhe-hl-h.2410] Fan letter from Marie Flower, 6th March 1925



## **Appendix B: 'Past Attitudes to Animals' – an educational resource for GCSE English Language**

As part of the impact and educational outreach work for the 'Hardy and Heritage' project, an online resource was created to support the study of nineteenth and early twentieth-century non-fiction for GCSE English Language.

Full information about this resource can be found at:

<http://hardyandheritage.exeter.ac.uk/schools-resource/>

A direct link to the resource is provided below:

<http://hardyandheritage.exeter.ac.uk/gcse-english-language-revision/>

The focus on past attitudes to animals draws on a shared research interest between my supervisor and myself: Hardy and animal welfare. In particular, it relates to the topics discussed in chapter two of this thesis. It aims to open up archival and special collection material to a younger audience.

The following pages provide examples of the content and functionality. In addition, a sample lesson plan has been included.

**B1) User information provided on the ‘New Resource for Schools’ tab of the ‘Hardy and Heritage webpage.**

[HOME](#)   [RESEARCH TEAM](#)   [DIGITAL METHODS](#)   [BLOG](#)   [NEW! RESOURCE FOR SCHOOLS](#)   [HARDY](#)

[Home](#) > New! Resource for Schools

## New! Resource for Schools

Welcome to our [online study resource](#) which will help you revise for your GCSE English Language exam.

If your GCSE English Language exam includes the study of non-fiction from the nineteenth and/or twentieth centuries then this resource is for you!

(Relevant exam boards include: AQA, OCR, Eduqas and CCEA. Please note that 20<sup>th</sup>-century resources can also be used for Edexcel.)

[Download the questions \(optional\)](#)

### How can the Slider Reviser help you with your revision?

- Practise reading 19<sup>th</sup>-century and/or early 20<sup>th</sup>-century non-fiction texts
- Examine writers' viewpoints and perceptions in texts
- Practise analysing language

## Why is it all about animals?



*A Victorian visit to the zoo. Graphic, 1891*

In your GCSE English Language exam you will answer questions on two different texts from different centuries. The two texts will be linked by theme or topic. The Slider Reviser uses attitudes to animals as one example of a theme.

(Please note that if your exam board is Edexcel, you just need to skip to the third section 'Hardy and Friends' for access to twentieth-century texts.)

## How do I use the Slider Reviser?

There are three areas to explore:

1. **Victorian Pets**
2. **Empire and Animals**
3. **Hardy and Friends**

Each section opens with an introductory slide to give you some context, then it's over to you to try reading and responding to non-fiction texts. You can move through all of the slides in order or jump to a particular slide.

We suggest that you do **one or two slides per revision session**.

- Use the **arrow** at the bottom to move between slides **OR** select a particular slide.
- Click on texts to **enlarge** and **zoom in**.

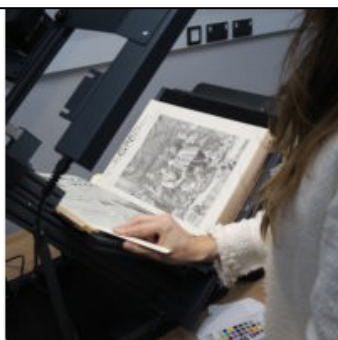
- Use the **arrow** at the bottom to move between slides **OR** select a particular slide.
- Click on texts to **enlarge** and **zoom in**.
- Underlined words display definitions when you hover over the text.
- You will find **questions** in each section, which you can use to **practise** analysing non-fiction texts.
- **Write down your answers** to the questions (we advise using a **revision notebook** to keep all your work together) and then click on **REVEAL ANSWER** to see a short **example answer**. Remember that there is no one right answer, so don't worry if you write about different things. In the exam you will need to make several different points, so you should think about the sample answer as just one point from a longer response.

### Where have the texts come from?



We have collected articles and illustrations from a **19<sup>th</sup>-century illustrated newspaper** called the [\*Graphic\*](#). The original copies of this newspaper are held in [Special Collections](#) at the University of Exeter.





*Digitising The Graphic.*

You will also see some **letters**, all from the early **20th century**, written to or from a famous poet and novelist called Thomas Hardy. The original letters are held at [Dorset County Museum](#) and were recently digitised at the University of Exeter.

### Feedback

So that we can make sure this resource is as useful as it can be, please go to the **Feedback** slide at the end of the Slider Reviser once you have finished.

### TEACHERS

**Students can use the slider reviser to study independently at home or at school. The resource can also be used in the classroom for more extended analysis of some of the longer texts.**

**We have also provided two suggested lesson plans with additional texts. More lesson plans coming soon!**

Lesson 1:

[Fur Fashion Lesson Plan](#)

Lesson 2:

[Lesson plan 2 Attitudes & viewpoints in letters](#)

[Attitudes and viewpoints in letters PowerPoint](#)

## B2. Screenshots from the online resource\*

1. Introduction
2. Extract from a letter from  
Thomas Hardy to Florence  
Henniker
3. Extract from a letter from  
Florence Henniker to  
Thomas Hardy

Online, the digitised images of the letters can be made to appear full screen and the student can use the zoom function to explore the text more closely. A transcript of each handwritten text opens in a new window.

\*A larger image for each sample page has been included on subsequent pages.

**PAST ATTITUDES TO ANIMALS**

1. INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our online study resource which will help you revise for your GCSE English Language exam.

HOW TO USE THE SLIDER REVISOR

- Use the arrows at the bottom to move between slides OR select a particular slide.
- Click on texts to **enlarge** and **zoom in**.
- Underlined words** display definitions when you hover over the text.

There are 3 sections to explore:

SECTION 1: VICTORIAN PETS

SECTION 2: EMPIRE AND ANIMALS

SECTION 3: HARDY AND FRIENDS

**PAST ATTITUDES TO ANIMALS**

18. HARDY'S PROTEST

Thomas Hardy disagreed with any animal being forced to perform tricks, as you can see from this letter to his friend Florence Henniker. He used his position as a famous writer to make a public protest in *The Times* newspaper.

[Read the transcript](#)

Q

- What examples of emotive language can you find in this letter?
- How does emotive language convey Hardy's views on performing animals?

21 Dec 1913

16. CONTENT

17. HARDY AND HIS PETS

18. HARDY'S PROTEST

19. MURDEROUS MILLINERY

20. ANIMAL CHARITIES

21

**PAST ATTITUDES TO ANIMALS**

19. MURDEROUS MILLINERY

During the late Victorian and Edwardian periods, it became very fashionable to have exotic feathers - or whole birds - as decoration on ladies' hats. This endangered some species of birds and as a result a growing number of men and women decided to fight against what they called 'murderous millinery'.

Hardy's friend, Florence Henniker, wrote to Hardy about this in a letter.

Q

- What examples of Henniker's language can you find that show her opinion of how animals are treated?
- How persuasive is she in getting her opinions across?

17 Jan 1914

17. HARDY AND HIS PETS

18. HARDY'S PROTEST

19. MURDEROUS MILLINERY

20. ANIMAL CHARITIES

21. FEEDBACK FORM



# PAST ATTITUDES TO ANIMALS

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our online study resource which will help you revise for your GCSE English Language exam.

### HOW TO USE THE SLIDER REVISER

- Use the **arrows** at the bottom to move between slides **OR** select a particular slide.
- Click on texts to **enlarge** and **zoom in**.
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There are 3 sections to explore:

#### SECTION 1: VICTORIAN PETS



#### SECTION 2: EMPIRE AND ANIMALS



#### SECTION 3: HARDY AND FRIENDS





# PAST ATTITUDES TO ANIMALS



## 18. HARDY'S PROTEST

Thomas Hardy disagreed with any animal being forced to perform tricks, as you can see from this letter to his friend Florence Hemmiker. He used his position as a famous writer to make a public protest in *The Times* newspaper.

Read the transcript

believe that a great many are  
 "used" in these tricks - that is,  
 tortured to death.  
 I wonder when I shall see  
 you. Not very soon I suppose, and  
 you have many interests to attend  
 to here. Your affectionate friend  
 Ned H.

21 Dec 1913

## 16. CONTEXT

## 17. HARDY AND HIS PETS

## 18. HARDY'S PROTEST

## 19. MURDEROUS MILLINERY

## 20. ANIMAL CHARITIES

21.

<http://hardyandheritage.exeter.ac.uk/gcse-english-language-revision/>



# PAST ATTITUDES TO ANIMALS

## 19. MURDEROUS MILLINERY

During the late Victorian and Edwardian periods, it became very fashionable to have exotic feathers – or whole birds – as decoration on ladies' hats. This endangered some species of birds and as a result a growing number of men and women decided to fight against what they called 'murderous millinery'.

Hardy's friend, Florence Henniker, wrote to Hardy about this in a letter.

- - What examples of Henniker's language can you find that show her opinion of how animals are treated?

- How persuasive is she in getting her opinions across?



### Read the transcript

There are a few things we have happened which cheer me. The pouring of the plumage into America, the sending of the leather from the West. But I fear the Delights of the poor inspection of the factory - poris is very as a his factory - & the M = Kenna - has been about it.

17 Jan 1914

Topic	Understanding attitudes and viewpoints in letters		
Session Aims:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Examine 20<sup>th</sup>-century non-fiction texts (letters)</li><li>Analyse language within non-fiction texts</li></ul>			
Resources			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Download PowerPoint Presentation A</li><li>Slide 13 on the online Slider Reviser: <a href="http://hardyandheritage.exeter.ac.uk/slider-reviser/">http://hardyandheritage.exeter.ac.uk/slider-reviser/</a></li><li>Worksheet on page 3.</li></ul>			
Links with digital revision resource: Section 3: Hardy and his friends			
Timing	Teacher-led Activity	Learner Tasks  <i>(Linked to Learning Outcome)</i>	Monitoring / Assessment  <i>(of Learner activity and/or learning outcome)</i>
5-10 mins	Manage group discussion as a starter task, exploring how we share ideas and viewpoints on social media and how postal correspondence has become less popular/ largely redundant due to technological advances.	Questions for students:  When did you last write a letter?  When did you last write a text message?  When did you last share something on social media?	Verbal discussion
5-10mins	Introduction:  Go through slides 2-5 to explain that Thomas Hardy and Florence Henniker were friends in the late 19 <sup>th</sup> and early 20 <sup>th</sup> centuries.  Info to share with class: Letter-writing was crucial		

	<p>to maintaining their friendship as Hardy lived in Dorchester and Henniker lived in Kent. They met in London at times but the way they kept in touch was through the postal system. N.B&gt; This could open up discussion about the similarities and differences of letters and social media.</p>		
15-20 mins	<p><b>Reading 20<sup>th</sup>-century non-fiction letters:</b></p> <p>Use Slide 13 on the online resource</p> <p><a href="http://hardyandheritage.exeter.ac.uk/slider-reviser/">http://hardyandheritage.exeter.ac.uk/slider-reviser/</a></p> <p>Examine sample answers and discuss what is good about it but also what could be improved and how this could be extended for a full exam response.</p> <p>(N.B. The sample answer is only short, not the extended responses required for full exam answers.)</p>	<p>If students are in a computer room they can work directly from the online resource, slide 13. Alternatively, the letter extract can be printed out and the questions displayed on classroom projector.</p> <p>Read the text as a class, discuss the question. Students make bullet point answers in pairs and then feedback as a class response.</p>	<p>Share analysis on the board as a class.</p>

15-20 mins	<p>Explain independent task.</p> <p>Read Hardy's protest letter to <i>The Times</i> in full and then instruct students to focus on the selected extract on the worksheet. (See page 3)</p> <p>N.B. This text does mention the sensitive issue of animal punishment and so might not be suitable for all students/classes. Please use or adapt at teacher's discretion.</p>	Students to work independently to answer the questions relating to this text.	Peer marking
5 mins	Recap: Hardy and Henniker had letters but we have texts, Facebook and Twitter to keep in touch and share ideas with others.	<p>Turn this lesson into a tweet!</p> <p>How would you summarise what you have learnt today as a tweet? (Using up to 280 characters)</p>	
Extension work	<p>Examine an article about current campaigns to ban circus animals i.e.</p> <p><a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-politics-43059752">http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-politics-43059752</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.itv.com/news/wales/2018-02-14/plans-to-ban-wild-animals-in-circuses-in-wales-move-a-step-closer/">http://www.itv.com/news/wales/2018-02-14/plans-to-ban-wild-animals-in-circuses-in-wales-move-a-step-closer/</a></p>		
Home work	<p>Students could work from Slide 10 on the Slider Reviser as part of their independent revision.</p> <p><a href="http://hardyandheritage.exeter.ac.uk/slider-reviser/">http://hardyandheritage.exeter.ac.uk/slider-reviser/</a></p>		
	<p><b>Lesson resources:</b></p>		

## Thomas Hardy's protest letter in *The Times* (December 1913)

### PERFORMING ANIMALS.

#### MR. HARDY'S PROTEST.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—As I read your Correspondent's letter on the above subject, he confuses theory with practice in his arguments. Quite possibly some animals may be, and are, trained for performances without discomfort to themselves, but there is ample evidence to show that many trainers prefer short cuts to attain their ends, and that these short cuts are by the way of cruelty. I have been present at dog performances at country fairs, where the wretched animals so trembled with terror when they failed to execute the feat required of them that they could scarcely stand, and remained with eyes of misery fixed upon their master, paralysed at the knowledge of what was in store for them behind the scenes, whence their shrieks could afterwards be heard through the canvas.

'I have been at dog shows at country fairs where the wretched animals so trembled with terror when they failed to execute the feat required of them that they could scarcely stand, and remained with eyes of misery fixed upon their master, paralysed at the knowledge of what was in store for them behind the scenes, whence their shrieks could afterwards be heard through the canvas.'

Q2)

- a) What examples of emotive language can you find in this part of Hardy's protest letter?
- b) How does emotive language convey Hardy's views on performing animals?
- c) What are the similarities and differences between Hardy's published letter and his private correspondence?

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